WINNER TAKES ALL

WILLIAM J. LOCKE

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ANCESTOR JORICO

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

IDOLS
PERELLA
JAFFERY
VIVIETTE
SEPTIMUS
DERELICTS
THE USURPER
STELLA MARIS
WHERE LOVE IS
THE ROUGH ROAD
THE MOUNTEBANK
THE RED PLANET
JOSHUA'S VISION
THE WHITE DOVE
ANCESTOR JORICO
FAR-AWAY STORIES
THE GREAT PANDOLFO
SIMON THE JESTER
THE COMING OF AMOS
THE TALE OF TRIONA
A STUDY IN SHADOWS
STORIES, NEAR AND FAR
A CHRISTMAS MYSTERY
THE WONDERFUL YEAR
THE HOUSE OF BALTAZAR
THE FORTUNATE YOUTH
THE BELOVED VAGABOND
AT THE GATE OF SAMARIA
THE GLORY OF CLEMENTINA
THE MORALS OF MARCUS ORDEYNE
THE KINGDOM OF THEOPHILUS
THE DEMAGOGUE AND LADY PHAYRE
THE JOYOUS ADVENTURES OF ARISTIDE PUJOL

ANCESTOR JORICO

By

WILLIAM J. LOCKE

New York
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
1929

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE VAIL-BALLOU PRESS, INC., BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

ANCESTOR JORICO

CHAPTER I

I SUPPOSE, after all, I had better tell this story myself, the story of Toby and his three cousins, all descendants of a dreadful old gentleman, one Captain John Gregory Jorico, who died in 1830. It is mainly, however, the story of Toby, Major Wilfrid Tobin Boyle, D.S.O., M.C., and of Jones, his body-servant through whom Romance entered into Toby's disgruntled post-war life.

The story, such as it is, might reasonably be entitled "A Family Affair." I, who speak, am more or less of the Family, though not descended from Ancestor Jorico, and so is my cousin, Lady Jane Crowe, who plays an important part in the narrative. It is only, however, because I have shared in a common, mild adventure, and, as a patient and fairly amiable old buffer, have listened to the confidences, confessions, grievances, hopes and rigmaroles of nearly everybody concerned, that I dare bring myself into the story at all. I needn't do it, of course; but you must bear with me while I try to do things in my own way.

So I must tell you first, very briefly, something about myself—"declare my authority," as the winning opener of a jack-pot must do in the game of poker.

I am Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Forester, K.C.B., et cetera. I have a wife and two daughters who have nothing whatever to do with the story, and so you won't hear much of them. I am just a retired professional soldier, living on scraps. I cannot say that I'm comfortably off. I was

discussing ways and means the other day with an old decayed fellow warrior, and he shouted: "Dammit, sir, no gentleman these days is comfortably off. It's a contradiction in terms."

At any rate, I must supplement my slender income. The pen, though perhaps not really mightier than the sword, is more useful than the poor darned old steel thing that can't be pulled out of its scabbard for rust. So I write a bit. I write for anybody or anything, from the "Quarterly Review" to "Home Chat." I'm not proud. A couple of years or so ago I published a novel—about Burma in the early days when I was a subaltern. Everyone said it was a jolly good novel. I think it was myself, seeing that, up to date, I've received two hundred and seventy-three pounds, seventeen and sixpence in royalties.

You see, I'm explaining myself as fast as I can.

Now Toby comes in.

"When are you going to write another novel, sir?"

"As soon as I can get an idea for one," said I.

If you think you can go out into the hedgerows, no matter how figurative the word may be, and pick ideas like blackberries, you're mistaken. You might just as well have asked me to find and engender an idea for the conversion of the paper on which I am writing into a negotiable million-pound bank-note.

"What about our little Jorico stunt?" said Toby. "It's quite a tale."

"Quite," said I. "You were always a resourceful chap."

He had been on my staff during the war, after wounds and gas and what-not had knocked him out of the trenches, and I had found him full of brains and enthusiasm. Besides,

he was a sort of second cousin or half-nephew of mine, by marriage—I never can exactly determine which—and I had known him, off and on, since he was born.

"It might be a good yarn," said Toby. "And I and all the rest of us will be only too happy to put you wise on details."

"Very good of you," said I. "I'll think about it."

Well, I have thought about it, and the following pages are the result of my investigation of the affairs of people which were influenced by the will of a slave-trading, buccaneering, piratical old sea captain, John Gregory Jorico, who died about a hundred years ago.

It was the fascination of Jones, however, that finally led to my momentous decision.

I don't know whom to explain first, Toby or Jones. Toby in the war was a very gallant soldier. He was messing about in an Art School when the war came. But he held a subaltern's commission in a fine Territorial Regiment. His keenness, in the days when the prospect of a European war seemed an absurdity to both the fat bourgeoisie and the intellectual doctrinaires of England, opened my heart to the boy. I would say to him: "Why the devil don't you get somehow into the Regular Army?" But it was a question of family ways and means, and, also, there was the artistic side of him.

As far as ever I've been able to make out Toby, his conception of Valhalla would be the cleaving, for all eternity, of enemies from helm to chine with one hand, while with the other he drew pictures of young Valkyrie in engaging attitudes and diaphanous costume. He never inhabited a dug-out in France without papering it with

the joy of all that was alien to the mud and blood in which the males of the race had to wallow.

You see, I have to explain a double-sided Toby: an essential soldier and a youth captivated by an artistic facility in portraying draped and undraped female loveliness. He had an individual line, and a wonderful sense of drapery. I have some of his early drawings which, uncomfortably off though I am, I wouldn't sell for any money. But at heart—and this I know; for not only do I love the boy, but as a professional who commanded a division in France with no discredit, may therefore claim the privilege of expert judgment—Toby was a soldier and nothing else but a soldier.

I repeat that I knew him as a keen Territorial before the war. As far as the hideous phantasmagoria, which was the mind of a man in high command during the war, allowed, I followed his career. If he hadn't been knocked out he would have had his battalion. You may call it favouritism, nepotism—what you will—but when a hard-driven General of Division wants a smart fellow on his staff and finds a divinely-created member of his family waiting for a job, he would be a criminally conscientious lunatic not to send for him. That is how Toby and I became real friends.

Toby now is thirty-five. I am any age you like. Put it that my earliest memory was threading Noah's beard with my baby fingers and asking whether the barnacles I found there were good to eat.

I had better begin with Toby.

You see him at a point when the story is about to open in his private office. It was the last kind of office in which

anyone would have dreamed of seeing Toby at work. You must see him closing a door on a laugh and a scent of furs, and turning to a softly lit room all discreet greens on floors and windows, with a Louis XV writing-table and Louis XV chairs. Faintly coloured old French prints hung around the walls. It was supposed to be restful to the nerves of women agitated by the realities of a meaningless existence. So had said its investor, Toby's mother, who had the cynical grain of musc inherent in the character of all great women.

On an ash-tray smouldered the cigarette-end which the departing visitor had left. He threw it into the fire behind his writing-seat, and pressed a bell. A door opened and a trim young woman entered with a pile of typewritten letters. He sat down; glanced through them; signed them.

"That all?"

"Yes, Major Boyle."

"Thank God!"

"Mrs. Palmer begs me to tell you that the Honourable Mrs. Bemmerton is being fitted and would like to see you."

"Damn," said Toby. "What's the matter?"

The secretary didn't know. The appointment was entered on the card in front of him. Toby nodded. The secretary gathered up the letters and retired. Toby, referring to the Hon. Mrs. Bemmerton, damned the woman. He rose, rubbed both eyes with the tips of his fingers, a favourite gesture, and grinned helplessly. The forthcoming interview was a commonplace incident in his daily routine; yet custom could not stale his frantic dislike of Mrs. Bemmerton and her kind. They brought out the worst in him, though on the demonstration of that in him which was most suave depended the prosperity of "Palmyre," and his own liveli-

hood. For "Palmyre," which, since his mother's death, he owned and ran, ranked among the first dozen fashionable dressmaking establishments in London. It had branches in Paris, Deauville, Cannes. . . . Toby in an almost literal sense of the word was its presiding genius. He had the inspired eye for colour, material, line, drapery and all that goes to the creation of feminine costume. He had been unconsciously cultivating the gift during the war, when he covered dug-outs with dreams of female exquisiteness.

"I must look around for a job," said Toby on demobilization.

"There's one to your hand," said his mother, who had manfully built up the business so as to support not only a post-war Toby, but a husband who, having passed most of his life in the service of a great Insurance Company, had retired on a pension of a few hundreds a year. "A job waiting for you. Come into the business and help with the designing."

As nobody else in London, or Great Britain, or the British Empire, seemed to be clamouring for the services of a demobilized Major of Territorials, Toby fitted up a little studio in the back of the Hanover Street premises and began to earn his living. And now he owned the concern and put all his strength and his brain into its development —and loathed the sight and the sound and the smell of it.

You see, he was the last fellow in the world you would have taken for a man dressmaker. He was an agreeably and attractively brown man. His hair was brown, his skin was light brown, and of that queer texture that encourages brown freckles. His eyes were brown, and the shaggy eyebrows were of a deeper brown. Without being hirsute there

was a hint of brown fluff on his hands. He was fairly tall, loosely built; one of those men who look well in any uniform formally pre-arranged—military uniform, tennis or golfing kit, full evening dress—but the most lounging-looking fellow you ever saw in what is called a lounge suit. He could spot with accuracy the imperfections in a woman's elaborate attire, but he seemed to be unaware that decently dressed men don't go about with their collar-stud showing above their tie, their socks unsupported by suspenders and the laces straggling disgracefully over their shoes. Not all Jones's earnest pressing could maintain the crease in the brown material of Toby's trousers. Many women called him a bear; others, from another feminine point of view, a pet lamb. The latter he regarded with the greater distaste.

His hand felt a pipe in his jacket pocket. He would dearly have loved to fill it, light it, and, thus furnished with masculine attribute, confront the Hon. Mrs. Bemmerton. But gentlemen don't interview strange ladies pipe in mouth, and Toby was a gentleman before ever he came to be a dressmaker. He was also, by nature, a cheerful gentleman with an ironical twist at the corners of his lips and a quiet gleam of humour in his eyes. I have, however, seen the quiet gleam of humour grow deadly. Warfare is apt to develop that sort of thing.

Toby passed out of his luxurious pseudo-Louis XV office on the first floor and descended to the show room, a sensuous hall of pile carpets, mirrors and women. Women of all sorts. Saleswomen in impeccably unobtrusive black. Women in furs fingering materials. A queenly woman in evening dress, a mannequin, showing off a cloak to two dull-

looking elderly women. At the back was a row of fitting cubicles, and at the door of one stood the fitter on the look-out for Toby. He crossed at her beckoning.

The Hon. Mrs. Bemmerton, thin, dark, raddled, stood within surveying herself in the long mirror. She wore an evening dress of dead rose and old gold. She turned as Toby entered.

"I'm glad you've come, Major Boyle. Just look at it."

She spun round.

"I see," said he.

"It won't do at all."

"It's rotten," said Toby.

"I'm glad you agree," she said acidly.

"It's nothing to do with me," said Toby. "If you'd kept to my original design it wouldn't have been rotten. You insisted on modifications"—he went into details—"this is the result."

"Well. What are you going to do about it?"

"Whatever you suggest, Mrs. Bemmerton."

"I think it's disgraceful not to be able to carry out my idea. What if I leave the dress on your hands?"

Toby shrugged his loose shoulders. Mrs. Bemmerton was both rich and influential and one of the few women he attended to personally. He vowed he would do so no more.

"To put things bluntly, Mrs. Bemmerton," said he, "if you want your own ideas carried out, this isn't the sort of place to come to. People come to me for my ideas. That's my only reason for existence." He smiled. "You must either leave it on my hands or return to the original design. I can't let that thing go out under the name of 'Palmyre.' It

would ruin my reputation." He glanced at his wrist-watch. "I'm so sorry. I have an appointment."

He bowed pleasantly and left her.

Mrs. Bemmerton wanted the dress. The colours suited her. It was for an early special occasion. She had told her friends about it. But she knew that Major Boyle wouldn't send it to her in its present state. So she capitulated. She was one of the women who looked on Toby as a bear.

Toby, his day's work done, walked home to his flat in Mount Street, no great distance. It was a fine, brisk evening, and he sniffed the pure air with enjoyment and rejoiced in the sight and sound of men on the busy pavements. He lit his pipe at a street corner. If he had posed theatrically to himself, he would have turned down a side street and drunk a mug of ale at a common pub, and talked man's talk with frowsty loafers. But Toby was downright and honest, as much to himself—so far as it is granted me to judge the workings of another man's soul—as to the world at large.

I mention this because it was once the subject of a talk between us.

"Sometimes I feel," he said, "as if I should like to mix with the lustiness of cabmen and prize-fighters and racing touts—just for the sheer masculinity of it—as a reaction from the dreadful world of women in which I have to live. But that's all lunatic. I couldn't be happy outside my own social element."

I record his words here on account of their relation to after events in Toby's life.

Toby, although he had a latch-key, rang the bell of his

Mount Street flat. The door was opened by one who had the aspect of the perfect manservant; a man of about Toby's age, thin, of medium height, with a sallow, rather finely cut, intelligent face, and astonishingly quick, light blue eyes. He smiled as he took Toby's hat and stick. Toby made a few passes in the air. The man shook his head and made the first few movements of a man dealing cards. After the rapid interchange of a few more signs, Toby received the information that his father, Mr. Wilfrid Boyle, was at the Athenæum, where he played bridge most afternoons, and would not be home for dinner. The man preceded his master, and threw open the door of what, in most aristocratic Mount Street flats, would be the drawing-room, but in this case was Toby's own room, equipped with every article of furniture and adornment that woman would most abhor. His father said it looked like the stranger's smoking-room of a third-rate club. I never could agree to this, seeing nothing third-rate about Toby. The leather-appointed, anyhow-equipped, loose yet comfortable place was a fit setting for Toby's clothes, and Toby's clothes, apart from uniforms, were Toby himself.

He threw himself into a chair before a blazing fire. The man touched his shoulder with a delicate finger. Toby looked up. With twinkling swiftness the man sketched three ideas: the motion of raising a cup; the thumb motion of squirting soda from a siphon; the shaking of a cocktail. Toby smiled and made the thumb gesture. The man departed and returned quickly with a tray on which was whisky decanter, glass and siphon half clouded from its stay in the ice-box. He poured out the drink. Toby made a

questioning sketch in the air. The man, in lightning pantomime, informed him that his host at dinner expected him to wear the dress-coat and white tie of ceremony.

"Oh, damn!" said Toby.

The man didn't hear, but smiled pleasantly; and, drawing from his pocket one of those patent tablets on which you can write and from which you can erase by a slip of the hand, drew with a rapid stroke what was, practically, the ideograph of a woman. Toby took it from him and drew an ideographic hand holding a pistol at the woman's head. Then they both laughed. It was Toby's little joke. Mutual comprehension had been perfect. Communication by speech might possibly have taken longer. The man retired. Toby took up the evening paper that had been laid on the club fender-seat to air, refilled his pipe and gave never another thought to Jones.

For this bright-eyed, swift-witted deaf and dumb man was Jones, but for whom this history would never have been written.

In these days I know, except on privileged occasions, one does not mention war to ears polite. The last one was rather a vulgar and messy business, and nice people agree that we should regard it as not having happened. We don't talk of ropes in the house of a man who has been hanged. A matter of taste. Also, it's a bit old-fashioned. My old father served as a subaltern in the Crimea and in the Indian Mutiny. He bored my boyhood stiff. I, an old soldier, confess it.

But I can't explain Jones without dragging in the war, for it made Jones what he was—a Mystery. I'll be as brief

as I can. Toby has told me all about it. He can be picturesque at times when the artist gets hold of him. He also has the soldier's gift of accurate statement.

You must imagine a hell of a summer dawn on the Western front, cloudy, threatening rain. Attack, counter-attack along a big sector of the line, artillery thundering, a mine explosion on what we hoped was an impregnable position to our left. Hell let loose. You'll find the engagement recorded in any history of the war. But I'm not going to record it. All that concerns my story is that Toby, then a captain, got back to his trench with a handful of his Company. Our barrage stopped the counter-attack. Stretcher-bearers went out and brought in the wounded. It was a mess, as I say, all along the sector. The rain came down and the mud mingled with the blood in every trench. It was a stalemate of an engagement, anyway, in that we kept the line; but the casualties were horrible. . . .

It was only long after, when the wounded had been cleared from the trench, and the roll of his Company was called with the pitiful response whose memory even now haunts Toby, that he became aware of a stranger, apparently physically fit, in spite of a blood-congealed contusion on the side of his head, who, in the scurry of the retreat, had fallen into the trench. He wore a hacked and horrid tunic of Toby's regiment. But he was not of Toby's regiment. Toby learned that he had huddled himself, naked to the waist, in the first tunic to hand that had been stripped from a desperately wounded man. He had fallen into the trench, as I say, half naked. His boots and puttees had gone. A slight abrasion of the skin showed that his identity

disc had either been torn or shot away. His clothing consisted solely of a pair of khaki breeches and a sort of bag of stout, old, blackened pigskin, together with the oval medal of the Virgin which most Roman Catholic English soldiers wore under their shirts, slung by a steel chain around his neck. He was deaf and dumb; could give no account of himself. Toby tried the deaf and dumb alphabet on his fingers in vain. By his gestures Toby gathered that he had been blown up in the mine explosion, and concluded that he must have been stripped as dead by enemies of the baser sort, who, however, had the decency to leave him his breeches and the superstition not to remove his medal or the thing that looked like some sort of reliquary. Toby wrote on a writing-pad. The man wrinkled his brow and shook his head. Whether he was illiterate—an uncommon, but far from unknown thing in the Army—or whether the mine explosion had knocked the power of reading and writing out of him, Toby had no means of determining. He certainly had not lost his memory. He had only lost means of self-expression. When Toby tried to discover his regiment a bright idea struck the man. He took Toby's pad and pencil and sketched a rough but comically adequate map of England. He made three dots, one on the west coast, one in London, one somewhere in the eastern counties. His gestures showed that he was born in the first, worked in the second, and, confirmed by the sign of a scrabbled skeleton man carrying a gun, that he belonged to an eastern county regiment. As his wounded skull seemed to give him no trouble, and he appeared to be only hungry and somewhat cold, Toby had him clothed and fed, and bothered no more about him. The medical staff had their

hands full. So had he. Then something hit him on the head and stunned him. It was nothing serious; but it knocked him out. When he recovered consciousness an hour or two later, he found the man, as batman, attending to his wants. "The chap would have it, sir," said the only surviving sergeant of Toby's Company, "and so I let him."

Well, that was how Jones dawned on Toby.

As I say, it was one of our little messes in the war. The people that ought to have relieved the front trenches got messed up themselves. Only the bluff saved the situation. The thinnest of front lines was held for some hours, until the line was relieved. Toby got his D.S.O. for it, though modestly he could never tell why.

All this, I repeat, is with the sole purpose of telling you about Jones.

He accompanied Toby like a faithful dog to more or less comfortable billets of rest behind the lines. And then, of course, Toby had to send the poor fellow back to England, a deaf and dumb man, who can only communicate with his fellows by means of savage gestures and coarse ideographs on paper, being a none too useful soldier in time of war. But Toby, who liked the bright-eyed, efficient and obviously grateful fellow whom he christened Jones, went to some pains to assure a personal touch with him, no matter into what hospital he might be drafted. Toby, as a soldier, was one of the thorough people. He left nothing to chance. That's why I loved him as a staff officer. He set his nets wide to catch the poor solitary fish, Jones, adrift in the welter of the hospital system of Great Britain. His most direct scheme was to supply Jones with twenty

stamped and addressed envelopes, the significance of which the intelligent Jones clearly understood. For Jones and Toby kept up together a queer correspondence. When Toby's envelopes had come to an end, Jones had obviously requested the hospital authorities to type him a fresh supply. Sometimes the nurses wrote themselves to Major Boyle. They said that mental specialists were most interested in Jones. Complete deafness, the breaking of ear-drums by explosives, aphasia induced by some lesion of the brain, the outward sign of which was the wound in the head, all complicated by common illiteracy; but in other respects a normal intelligence. He was a show case. The ordinary aphasiac could be got at through his ears. But Jones was stone-deaf. Writing was no use. He couldn't read. He was one of the few cases of complete aphasia, or loss of expression in words. So great specialists, and ordinary doctors and nurses, petted and spoiled Jones, and gave him an exceeding good time in hospital.

That's all I know of the clinical side of the man's affliction. You will find his case, which has nothing to do with shell-shock or amnesia—loss of memory—recorded in the "Lancet." I have only to do with the man as I have known him and his relations with Toby.

It fascinated Toby for a couple of years to correspond pictorially with Jones. The slightest indication of outward form seemed to react on the intelligence of the stricken man, who responded in kind. Between them, almost insensibly, they invented an ideographic system of communication, which tended to become as formal as Egyptian hieroglyphics. No man with a kindly heart and a decent brain could have resisted the joy of the experiment, seeing

that the subject, a patient, was in desperate earnest to respond.

Afterwards, when they came together, they could do their ideographs by forefingers moving in the air. This I never could follow. I could generally make myself understood to Jones by my clumsy graphic ideographs and he, as though he were speaking to a child, would convey his ideas to me in simple drawings. And, naturally, there were the ordinary elementary gestures by which the least talented of mortals make their primitive wants known to those who do not speak their language. After that, I am done. The swift ideogrammic air-speed which Toby and Jones have invented between themselves is a mystery that is secret to themselves alone.

Well, perhaps Ruth has it, more or less. I have seen her talk to them both with flickers of fingers. . . . But I can't tell you about Ruth yet. I shall explain her later. I never realized, until I sat down to tell what appeared quite a simple tale, what a lot of things and people there were to explain.

At any rate, at the risk of offending your intelligence, I must emphasize the fact that this queer sign language in which Toby and Jones communicated with each other was utterly remote from the deaf and dumb alphabet. Jones, as far as medical science could conjecture, had the full equipment of English words necessary to formulate his thoughts to himself. He had only lost the means of expressing them, could not be taught to recognize them by movement of the lips.

The history of Toby and Jones up to the point of the beginning of my story is simplicity itself. When Toby was

demobilized, he sought out Jones and, liking the man exceedingly, engaged him as manservant. With what other human soul was Jones in so close communication as Toby? I think that in those early post-war days Jones must have regarded Toby as a kind of god. What other chance of salvation from madness had the fellow? I put it to you from a material point of view, apart from the natural gushing of human gratitude. . . . On the one side was life for ever in some post-war home for incurables, as an interesting case—the real interest of which no one could be at the trouble to convey to his mind—occupied like the blind, or like the semi-imbecile, in trivial art and craft handiwork or whatnot; on the other, the freedom of the great world in the service of the only human creature who had what, to Jones, must have been the God-sent genius to establish a living line of thought-transference. As to the rough communications of life, he could be explanatory to nurse and comrades, or to myself, when I came to know him. But, as far as my psychological efforts can go, it was to Toby alone that he felt himself related in the realm of the abstract idea.

Can you wonder that he regarded Toby as a god?

He went into his service. It became one of Toby's delightful interests in life to invent means of communication with Jones. He discovered, for instance, that Jones, although stone-deaf, was in his body sensitive to certain electrical vibrations. He went to much trouble to rig up such an attuned apparatus in his flat. That was why, in order not to hurt Jones's feelings, and also to keep him in practice, he generally rang his front-door bell, instead of letting himself in with his latch-key.

And then, as soon as they lived together as master and servant, the pencilled ideograph began to develop into the sign language which I call their aerograph. From this Toby learned that Jones was an orphan, that his father had followed the sea, that he had been brought up as a Roman Catholic—which accounted for the medal respected by looting enemies—and that, having survived many evil days, he had joined up in the war. Many other details, necessarily vague, of his past life did he disclose to Toby. But his own name was beyond his power of ideographing and remained a mysterious secret locked up in his memory.

Toby read his evening paper, smoked his pipe and drank his whisky and soda and dropped off to sleep in front of the fire. Presently Jones appeared, and, waking him up, informed him that it was time to dress, and that his bath was ready. Toby swore. He didn't want to go out to dinner; especially to one where the presence of ladies ordained the wearing of dress-coat and white tie. He would greatly have preferred to go, just as he was, to his club, and talk with casual men and, perhaps, play a sober game of bridge.

But the dinner was an important one, as you shall see.

CHAPTER II

THE dinner-party was no less than a family gathering convened by my second cousin, Commander Sir Gregory Binkley, whose father, the eminent surgeon and first baronet, was my first cousin. This relationship doesn't matter; but there are others, which, as I warned you, will have to be appreciated. Why he invited me, I don't quite know; certainly not for my beautiful elderly eyes; possibly because he wanted to rope in Lady Jane Crowe, who stood to him in the same degree of relationship as myself.

He lived in a dull, conventional house in Queensborough Terrace, off the Bayswater Road, and all its appointments were dull and conventional. The few inherited odds and ends of good furniture and pictures seemed to protest against their surroundings and wish to goodness they could get away like their former mistress. For Lady Binkley had got away, got away with a vengeance, and there had been a painful divorce suit; and now she was, as far as I could hear, as merry as ten grigs with her new husband, a lusty engineer who was bridging cataracts somewhere in Africa. I may say at once that she doesn't come into the story otherwise than as a factor in Commander Sir Gregory Binkley's warped view of mundane things. I know he was fond of her in his fussy disciplinarian way, and her defection was as amazing and as upsetting of standards and as destructive of values as would be the indecorous flight of naked young witches on broomsticks through the solemn

halls wherein Houses of Convocation are wont to assemble. Instead of reflecting, like a reasonable being—myself, for instance: "Hasn't the fault lain in my own fussy disciplinarianism?" he became more and more fussy and disciplinarian than ever. As an old soldier, I've had to carry out, God knows, enough discipline in my time; but, once across the threshold of my own home, I leave all that sort of thing to my wife. After nearly thirty years of marriage, I shoulder arms to her and to my daughters like the rawest of recruits. And I wouldn't have it otherwise. The three of them regard me as the most helpless of pet lambs, and I've always wallowed in domestic comfort. But Binkie . . .

Here, by the way, is yet another thing to be explained. But it's remarkably simple. Could a man answering formally to the name of Binkley avoid being called "Binkie"? Of course not.

I must come to the dinner-party.

You know the type of house. A passage. Dining-room to your left. The passage continuing into vague dimness. A carpeted flight of stairs by the dining-room, twisting at right angles half-way up, and then the landing of the double drawing-room.

Ushered by the butler, I found, although I was not late, the company already assembled. Gregory, otherwise Binkie, a spare, short man with sparse hair and restless eyes, welcomed me cordially. He had asked Jane—Lady Jane Crowe —but she was in bed with a cold. Toby, of course, I knew. But Hettie Dalrymple and her brother, Nicholas Egerton?

I think I had seen them as children. I knew more or less about them. She was a widow, of about thirty-two, with

a small boy of ten, and was hard put to it to make a living. She was fair, pink-skinned, plump and pleasing, with blue eyes that smiled perhaps a trifle roguishly. I liked her at once. Her brother, Nicholas, many years younger, was a pale, anxious, indetermined, lanky youth, with indeterminate mouse-coloured hair. He called me "sir," most politely.

"That's the lot," said Binkie. "The four of us are the only lineal descendants of old John Gregory Jorico, whose name I bear. You, Tom, I've asked because you may give us the benefit of your advice and experience. Pity Jane couldn't come too; I've made a most important discovery."

The butler announced that dinner was served.

"What's it all about?" I asked.

"We'll dine first and then I'll tell you," said Binkie, in his crisp, quarter-deck manner.

We dined, not excitingly, but not too badly. The cook maintained the house's level of dull and undistinguished comfort. There were only the five of us. From Binkie's invitation one might reasonably have expected a family gathering of twenty. I sat next to Hettie Dalrymple. I must give Binkie credit for his champagne, a rosy Clicquot of 1911. How on earth he thought of getting the rare stuff, or managed to get it, is a mystery. It unlocked tongues. Halfway through the meal we found ourselves discussing the general damnability of the post-war world. I looked at the three men cousins, and judged their ages, fairly correctly, as I soon discovered. Gregory Binkley was forty-four; Toby thirty-five, and young Nicholas five-and-twenty. I belong to a generation that, war or no war, would be on the shelf. If there hadn't been a war, I might possibly be putting up a gouty foot on a wooden foot-rest, still provided by the

United Services Club. As the war has deprived me of the means to consume the amount of port adequate to the cultivation of gout, I walk about freely.

"If I only had something to remember the war by," said Gregory, "I shouldn't groan about modern conditions. Talk about the silent Navy. It's a damn sight too silent. Either I was boxed up in a battleship in Scapa Flow, or I was working my head off in an office in the Admiralty. Never heard a shot fired in anger! Bored, my God! I even missed the bit of spurious excitement at Jutland. Lots of us like that. When it was all over they paid us to clear out. Toby's the lucky one. He has got some memories to live upon."

"I trot 'em out of my sub-consciousness as little as I can," said Toby.

Binkie persisted. "Still, if you hadn't got 'em you'd find present circumstances pretty hard to stick. You've told me as much."

"I think it makes my present job all the more grotesque," said Toby, with a laugh.

I intervened. "And our young friend, Nicholas—what does he think about it?"

"I was too young to get into the war, sir," replied the boy, flushing a little. "I was still at school when it was over."

Heavens! thought I. Was what it pleased us to call Armageddon such ancient history as all that? And then I reflected that, the minimum age of service being 18, scarcely anyone born after the year 1900 could have taken part in it.

"What are you doing now?" I asked.

"I'm at a loose end, sir, like so many of us."

"Take up a hobby, my boy, as I've done," said Binkie.

"I'd take up any old hobby you like, Cousin Gregory," said Nicholas, flushing, "if I could make a living at it."

"I thought you were fixed up," said Toby. "Big preparatory school, wasn't it?"

The boy's flush deepened. He fiddled about with his bread. Hettie Dalrymple bent across the round table.

"He was till a few days ago. Then he had to chuck it."

"Chuck up a perfectly good job these days? Why?" asked Binkie.

"First it was a beast of a job, very much underpaid," flashed Hettie, "and then the Head, who had commanded a battalion of Y.M.C.A.s——"

I smiled. "He couldn't have done that, my dear."

She waved an impatient feminine hand. "Something inglorious, anyhow. A Chinese Labour battalion at Brest, or a Rest Camp at Monte Carlo—what does it matter? He was a Colonel and has suffered from military swelled head ever since. Well, he insulted Nick the other day, and Nick knocked him down on the hearthrug, and as far as I can see that's the end of Nick's scholastic career."

In her indignation she waved away the dish that was handed and drank some champagne. The boy, somewhat uncomfortable, turned to me, his left-hand neighbour.

"He wasn't quite as bad as my sister makes out. He started as a padre and then got a general commission. It was sporting enough of him. But I think power spoiled him. When he got his battalion—it was a Labour battalion—he must have had an awful lot of duds as officers under him. And so he returned to civil life with the impression that all of us under him must be duds too. I

stood it as long as I could, three years, ever since I went down from Cambridge. Then he tried to tick me off—I think that's what you used to call it—in his best military manner, for something I'd never done. I resented it. He called me a liar and I went for him." He smiled with wry humour. "Saving your presence, sir, that's all I've got out of the war."

"What's wrong with you young people of the present generation," said Binkie, "is that you won't begin to understand what discipline means."

"Oh, don't talk damned nonsense," cried Toby. "If the General said that, I'd defer politely to an old standard. But he has far too much common sense. And you, you're far too young. You're only forty-four. You belong to our generation. Discipline! We're sick of discipline. We've this infernal modern world standing over us like a sergeant-major. We don't want any individual Colonels or even Lieutenant-Generals"—he threw me a disarming laugh—"to discipline us. We're out for independence, self-assertion. Damn the sergeant-major. It was all very well in the old days to bow to routine and accept thankfully whatever Providence offered you. I must say that Providence did its best. But now it doesn't. We've got to fend for ourselves."

Said I: "My dear Toby, you're fending for yourself and apparently making a fairly good thing out of it. But, as far as I can make out from things you've told me, you seem to be as much disgruntled with life as Binkie and our friend, Nicholas."

Mrs. Dalrymple laid her fingers on my arm.

"I don't think, General, you're taking my young brother's case seriously."

I protested. "Indeed I do, my dear cousin. A hundred years ago an old soldier in my present position would have said: 'Dammit, madam. A lad of spirit. Knocked the schoolmaster's head off! Splendid! Send him to me and I'll see him through.' But, my dear, although these are my real and sincere feelings, the expression of them would be worse than futile in this more sophisticated epoch."

"It sounds as if you were making a speech," she said with laughing impertinence.

"It does," said I. "But if you think a soldier's only job is to hack people about with a sword, you're mistaken. He has to talk and talk and talk, and that's how I've got the hang of it."

"But the Navy is always silent," she remarked with a glance at our host.

We laughed at the mild jest. I began to like Hettie Dalrymple exceedingly. She was loyal, full of life, responsive, with a little gay sense of humour.

The talk drifted into conventional channels. Presently she said:

"Toby says he's fed up with women. That's why he scowled at me when he came in. But I'm fed up with men —and I defy any of you to have seen a trace of a scowl on my face."

"Why this hidden misanthropy?" I asked.

She explained that she spent her working days in the masculine environment of the advertising department of a young publishing firm. She had to deal with an outside

world of men. Some were charming, most indifferent, a few peculiarly horrid. She wrinkled a delicate nose. The intellectuals in journalism are not generally found in the rough and tumble of advertising staffs.

"On the whole—with the exception of the sexual primitives who give one a certain amount of trouble and business delays—I can't complain of men. But if only one could meet a woman now and then, and interrupt the silly talk and say: 'My dear, what a pretty hat! Where did you get it?' you've no idea what a joy it would be. But as a man, I suppose you can't understand."

"My dear," said I. "I've a wife and two daughters. I'll pay you a salary to come and admire their hats and gowns. It'll save me Heaven knows what."

"I'll come for nothing if they'll let me," she laughed.

"My wife will write to you tomorrow," said I.

I know not why, but reflection on the niceties of the English language swept across my mind. Had I said "shall write," I should have asserted myself as the Grand Bashaw of my harem. By saying "will" I was merely prophesying my dear wife's suave response to my request.

Coffee came and some abominable prematurely aged brandy. I thought of the rosy champagne. *Quantum mutatus ab illo!* But I learned later that the wine had been the choice of that prescient connoisseur, his father, and that the brandy was supplied to him, half a dozen bottles at a time, by an obscure wine merchant round the corner. Binkie had no use for the æsthetics of life. A primrose by the river's brim was to him, as to Peter Bell, but a damned primrose. Food, so long as he could chew it, and it didn't

reek of horrible flavour, was just food. Wine was wine, and brandy was brandy. What more could anybody want?

Perhaps, in the same way, a wife had been to Binkie a wife and nothing more. Wherefore the lady had left him for an engineer with a more highly developed æsthetic perception.

Binkie began to fidget. I could see that he wanted to get to the business of the evening by the way he glanced at our cups and glasses. When the cigars were handed round he said to me:

"Don't be afraid—we can smoke them upstairs. Hettie won't mind."

Then presently: "No more brandy, anybody? Then shall we go?"

We went up to the drawing-room, where he marshalled the four of us as if we were children about to be entertained by a conjurer. There was even a table holding his properties—books and papers—beside the fireplace, where he soon took up his position.

"The first thing I want to know is how many of you have heard of Captain John Gregory Jorico and his curious will, whereby he left a fortune of half a million of money."

I shook my head. He wasn't my ancestor, and I had never heard of him.

Toby laughed. "My mother used to refer vaguely to some such legend in her family."

"Nick and I were both too young to remember our mother, and our father never mentioned the matter."

"Good," said Binkie. "What I'm going to say will come to you with all the greater surprise."

He turned to the table. I felt disappointed that there was no hat on it, from which he might have extracted a rabbit.

CHAPTER III

He took up a few papers and cleared his throat.

"I've asked Sir Thomas to come here as a family friend, and a witness, and a man of great experience of men and things, and I feel sure he'll allow us to benefit by his advice."

"Anything I can do, my dear fellow . . ." said I.

"Thanks, Tom. I knew it. But what I want to make clear is that, when I say 'we' and 'you,' I'm referring to the set of four cousins, of whom I am the eldest.

"As you know, we are the children of three sisters, Mary, Jane, and Anne, who unfortunately are now dead. They were the only children of our grandfather Gregory Jorico, who, born in 1835, married a Miss Tobin, whence Toby gets his second Christian name, practised as a doctor in London, and died intestate in the year 1890.

"Gregory Jorico's father was one John Jorico, born in 1805, a Bristol merchant, who died in 1870. He had issue, Gregory, the doctor, and a daughter who died young. He was our great-grandfather—on our maternal side. I hope I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly," said Toby.

"This John Jorico's father, our great-great-grandfather, Captain John Gregory Jorico, is the ancestor with whom the four of us are vitally concerned. He was born in the year 1755 and died in 1830 at the age of 75.

"My mother, the eldest of the three sisters, I fancy was

more in the confidence of her father, Dr. Gregory Jorico, than your respective mothers. Besides, she married into his own profession—he and my father, Mowbray Binkley, from whom I inherited the baronetcy, were great friends. I remember him very well. He died when I was about 10—my mother when I was 35. I grew up, as it were, under the legend of the Family Fortune.

"It was, however, not till three years ago, when I was very badly hit—you all know what I refer to—that, finding myself at the very loosest end in life, it struck me that I might occupy myself in looking into this mythical fortune supposed to have been left by our ancestor, Captain John Gregory Jorico.

"All I had to go upon was the tradition that he died in Bristol. Our grandfather had told my mother that his father had said so.

"For three years I have ridden my hobby, and I think I've got somewhere."

He smiled genially, and paused as though he had used a humorous metaphor. Good-natured Toby nodded and said: "Good man." Young Nicholas stared into the fire.

"I think I've searched the records of every parish and every public institution in the city of Bristol. I advertised periodically in the Bristol papers for any information concerning the Jorico family." He pointed to the table. "I've lots of information.

"First, there's the Will of Captain John Gregory Jorico. Let us call him Ancestor Jorico for short. I've seen it with my own eyes in the District Registers of Bristol, which were set up among forty others by the Act of 1857. This is a copy of it . . ." He handed it round. "But it was almost

illegible, written evidently on his death-bed. One would say that the signature was the last dying effort in which he spent himself. Read it."

We read:

"1*st November* 1830. *I leave my fortune of* £500,000 *to my son. . . . (Signed) John Gregory Jorico.*"

"It was a paralytical scrawl," Binkie continued, "but it was a valid will. Laws relating to witnesses and so forth didn't come in till 1838. His son John proved it, and took possession of his father's estate.

"Not the half-million of money. That's the whole point of the business. Not a trace of the half-million was ever found. They had to attribute the great fortune to the megalomaniac dreams of a dying man. John inherited the comfortable little house in Vine Street, Bristol, where his father lived, and two or three thousand pounds loose cash, which, after all, was a jolly good sum to have in those days.

"Here is another fact in the Bristol records. This from the Parish Church of St. Stephen's, where I found the baptismal register. Great-grandfather John was a younger son. There was an elder called Gregory, born in 1803. I told you John was born in 1805.

"You see a point I must make. The dying Ancestor Jorico said in his will, 'My son.' Which son? I had to find out.

"I found that John married a Bristol girl—one Frances Appleworth. As great-grandfather John predeceased her, it appears that she had the custody of many of his family papers; and, having quarrelled with her son, our grandfather Gregory, because he had London ambitions, transferred all that she could, under his will, of her personal

effects to her own Appleworth family. There is still a distant cousin of hers, of the same name, a partner in a considerable Bristol brewery, who, when I tracked him down, I found had kept many interesting oddments of books and papers that had come down to him from the old lady. He has put the whole lot at my disposal. These are the most important ones. This, for instance."

He handed us a faded four-page newspaper—the "Port of Spain Gazette," 15th August, 1801. We read a paragraph which he pointed out:

"Just arrived, the Brig *Flora,* Master, Captain John Gregory Jorico, bringing 103 negroes, eighty males, sixteen females and seven children. All young and in perfect health. The same will be put up to Public Auction at 8 A. M. tomorrow. God save the King!"

"From this you will see," said Binkie, rubbing his hands with an air of humour, "that our illustrious Ancestor was engaged in the slave-trade. Pretty lucrative in those days. Here's something else that nobody for practically a hundred years has taken the trouble to look at."

He handed us a dirty, greasy, leather-bound note-book, a mass of unintelligible figures, with here and there the ordinary nautical references to latitude and longitude; obvious additions in pounds, shillings and pence, some trivial, some amounting to considerable sums. One column totted up unmistakably to £15,000. The mass of the book, however, seemed to be in a clumsy cipher.

"I had to do this rotten sort of work at the Admiralty during the war," said Binkie, beaming at us from the hearthrug. "I'll give you the deciphered details later. But this little book proves indubitably that our revered An-

cestor Jorico combined the profession of pirate and slave-trader. This account of his doings about the year 1800 is not only in cipher, but in some exasperating system of mnemonics for his own gratification.

"The thing I want to impress on you is this. No one reducing that note-book to alphabetical sense could sneer at Ancestor Jorico's half-million bequest as the senile dreams of a dying man.

"I've got all kinds of side-lights on Ancestor Jorico. He seems to have retired definitely from his profession in 1810 at the age of 55. But he had married and bought a house in Vine Street about ten years before. He was a man of substance. A couple of years before his death he bought land near Bath and sold it at a profit. I've seen the deeds. There's no sign of senile decay in the transactions of Ancestor Jorico. Death, as far as I can gather, took him by surprise. He had his half-million—ill-gotten if you like—private treasure; and, with the grip of Death on his throat, he found it behoved him to leave it to somebody. God knows who was present at his bedside. Great-grandfather John? I don't know . . ."

He paused. Everybody drew a short breath. He displayed a sense of drama with which I should not have credited him.

"Remember," he went on, "there was a son, Gregory, two years older than John. I have a copy of his baptismal certificate."

He passed the slip round. It contained little information besides that which he had already given. The father was described as "Master Mariner."

"I've not been able to trace the families of godfathers and godmothers beyond the year 1848. They must either

have died out or left Bristol. I mention this only to show you that I have left few stones unturned. But the gem of my collection is this."

He took from his conjurer's table an oval locket with a thin gold rim. It contained, like so many of the lockets of the period, only a lock of hair. This one was a wisp of the golden curl of a child.

"It opens, you see," said Binkie, with the air of one saying: "There's no deception, ladies and gentlemen."

He showed us writing on the back of the oval bit of cardboard that kept the curl in place. There were two inscriptions in entirely different handwritings. One was:

"*The haire of my beluved son Grigori aged 2 years.*"

"That," said Binkie, "was written by Ancestor Jorico's wife, who died in 1817. Her name, both on the baptismal certificates and on the register of deaths, was given as Juanita. Who she was, except a Spaniard—she couldn't spell her own child's name—God only knows. But the second entry is important."

"*Drowned at sea. J.J.*"

"That's in the handwriting of his brother, our great-grandfather, John Jorico. If I believed in Purgatory, I could wish him a couple of extra years in it for not putting in the date. They seemed to be a most unmethodical lot."

"I expect they enjoyed themselves all the more, Binkie," said Toby, leaning back in his chair, with hands clasped comfortably behind his head. "The only thing I didn't love about the Army, when it was my privilege to belong to it as an amateur, was its method. Your most secret thoughts, actions and desires have to be recorded on a yellow form made of beastly paper and headed with hideous

combinations of letters and figures. It was necessary for war—just like dug-outs and plum-and-apple jam. But the Joricos lived in piping times of peace. What use could they have had for method?"

"If there's one thing I should loathe," said the boy, Nicholas, "it would be the Army."

Binkie snapped at him. "Do you a dam lot of good, young fellow. Teach you to think straight and act straight."

"That's all right," Mrs. Dalrymple struck in pleasantly; "but what we all want to know is—what about the half-million of money which Gregory says is going to be shared among the four of us? A hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds! See the water running down the corners of my mouth. You don't say you can't lay your hands on it?"

Binkie made her a little bow, and his smile was crisp and pleasant.

"You must give me time, my dear Hettie. Like the Wild West young man at the piano, whom strangers were requested not to shoot, I'm doing my best. I haven't finished."

In a mechanical nervous movement he pressed back his shirt cuffs. If his nervous fingers had produced from thin air a half a million pound Bank of England note, I swear I should not have been surprised. A blue Persian cat—Binkie liked cats—give me the most mongrelly decent dog any day—rose from its slumbers on the opposite corner of the hearthrug, stretched, arched its back and looked up at him with the confident expectation of a Familiar. I will not deny that there was some tensity in the air of excited minds. For any one of the four cousins, a fortune of a

hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds would have revolutionized the universe. I, too, an outsider, was strung up. So, when Binkie with an upheld finger and a smile of mystery on his face, and the cat still watching him to see that he made no mistake, announced that he had something up his sleeve, I burst out laughing.

Binkie looked pained. The cat stalked away in offended dignity. I caught Hettie Dalrymple's eye. She deliberately winked at me. I found I was liking her more and more. Young Nicholas lit a cigarette. Toby cried cheerfully:

"Of course you've got something up your sleeve, old chap. Let's have it out without so much method about it."

I saw a shadow of annoyance pass across Binkie's face. I reproached myself for my untimely laughter. Ridicule, except on deliberate occasions, is not a gentleman's weapon.

"My dear boy," said I, "you must forgive us. Don't you see you've put us all on edge? We're a bit hysterical."

Binkie yielded graciously.

"I never thought of that. You see, I've been plugging away at this for three years, and when I thought the proper time had come, I wanted to put the whole story before you logically and clearly, to set out all the steps that have made me arrive at what I think are my logical conclusions. I wanted to establish in your minds certain incontestable facts. At the risk of boring you, I'll recapitulate them. Ancestor Jorico was a slave-trader and a pirate. He amassed a great deal of treasure, on his own showing in the little note-book. That book only deals with one year, in which we see a total of £50,000 presumable profit. Suppose he continued at the same game for another ten years—until

1800. That would account for the half-million. But what did he do with the one year's £50,000? He either lost it, or didn't realize on it. As he definitely left £500,000 by will, I conclude that he didn't—or more probably couldn't—realize on it. I'm not a romantic man, as you all know. But I have been for some time logically convinced that there is hidden treasure to that estimated amount somewhere on the surface of the earth. My researches have proved that we four cousins are the only surviving heirs to this big fortune. I say I may have bored you by going into detailed ramifications of family history. But I thought it right you should have, like myself, a sound and indisputable ground-work to go upon. Don't you agree with me?"

He was very dignified and masterful. We all murmured something inarticulate, except Nicholas, who, greatly impressed, and catching Binkie's quarter-deck eye, said:

"Why, of course, Cousin Gregory."

"Good," said Binkie. "Now, Ancestor Jorico, as I have remarked before, besides carrying on his business as a slave-trader, was also engaged in professional piracy. He retired in 1810 on his profits from what then was, of course, honourable employment. He had married a Spanish woman —either resident in Trinidad—see the record in the 'Port of Spain Gazette' of 1801—or from the Spanish main; he had set up house in Bristol, where the eldest son, Gregory, was born, as the records show, in 1803. He must have gone on with his profession—slave-trading or what not—until he retired in 1810. How do I know he retired? I've seen his name over and over again since that date in the Bristol civic records. He was an Alderman, so please you, and a

Churchwarden of the Parish Church of St. Stephen's. All that's cut and dried. . . . His economic life was that of a comfortable Master Mariner who had retired on his savings. Nothing more. But behind him was the hidden private treasure. Hidden for some reason that no one can explain, and, also to him, as far as I can make out from the baffling records, inaccessible. But I . . ."

He turned to his conjurer's table and indicated some old leather-covered books.

". . . I am well on the track of its whereabouts. Here are three books out of the dozen known to belong to him that I have picked out as likely to contain information. They are the only ones which he seems to have read, and they are thumbed as though he had consulted them during his voyages and, if not annotated textually, they contain many entries and calculations in his own handwriting. Most of the additions are obviously sums of money and many of the items are prefaced by secret marks which I haven't any key to decipher, except on the hypothesis that they refer to precious stones. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the same hieroglyphics recur in various columns. Thus, for instance, if you assume an asterisk to refer to pearls, a long dagger to diamonds, and so on, the items 250 and 700 would represent pearls to the estimated value of £250 and diamonds to that of £700. Now here, in 'Crosby's Mariner's Guide,' published in 1762, is an isolated marginal note of £50,000, which corresponds to the entry in the little black note-book. By collating all the totals scattered over the margins and fly-leaves, I reach a figure practically reaching the half-million in the will." He held up the book, and a sheaf of typed papers, and threw

them back on the table. "I'll be most happy to go into the details another time, with any or all of you."

He paused dramatically, evidently enjoying himself. The tension still lasted. Hettie cried:

"But, Gregory, where's the treasure all the time? How you got at it is frightfully interesting, but we're all on tenter-hooks."

"I'm coming to it, my dear Hettie," said he with a little deprecatory gesture. "Just give me time. I *must* put things before you in logical sequence."

Toby whispered to me:

"I'm afraid the Admiralty found out that dear old Binkie hadn't the Nelson touch."

Well, Binkie took from his table—he must have spent an hour in arranging his properties, or what in Courts of Justice are called exhibits—a yellow bit of quarto-size paper, which, folded in four, had almost come to pieces at the folds, and held it out before us.

"I discovered this in 'Colson's Mariner's New Calendar,' published in 1772"—he pointed to the volume. "It is the rough map of an island . . ."

We could see that for ourselves while he went on with his exposition. It was almost a square island, but it ran out into a blunt headland on the northern end of the western side, and to a long promontory on the southern. In a corner of the page was a fairly drawn thing—I don't know what nautical folk call it—showing the spokes of the compass. From a point somewhere on the west side was drawn a line in a north-east direction, half-way across the map. It was ended by a circle in which was the conventional representation of a bird.

"Now, Tom," said he, "can you spot what island that is?"

A soldier doesn't see many islands. I was once stationed at Malta when I was young, and since then whatever devastating passion for islands I may have had has burned out. I shook an unintelligent head.

"Doesn't the 'Port of Spain Gazette' which I showed you give you an idea? It's the Island of Trinidad in the West Indies. The point where the short slanting line starts from is Port of Spain. I found that out for myself. I've never been there. All my service afloat has been in the Mediterranean and Home waters. But what was the meaning of the circle with a bird in it? I went to the Royal Geographical Society. They referred me to the West India Committee. There they overwhelmed me with information. They pointed out faint pencillings which could only be seen through a strong magnifying glass, which represented perfectly good rivers. Two of them ran into—or rather from the circle. And the circle marked with astonishing accuracy a cave inhabited by a kind of goat-sucker bird which is only found in two or three other places in the world. It is called to this day the Cave des Diablotins."

"And you think the treasure is buried there?" cried Hettie.

"I do."

"Forgive me if I seem dull," said Nicholas. "But I don't see how you connect up—the map with the figures."

Neither did I. But I suspected the conjurer of still keeping something up his sleeve. I was right. He said, smiling somewhat pityingly on the boy:

"Not one of you has noticed a 'W.B.' in a corner of the

map. What do these letters stand for? They look like the signature of the man who made the map. As a matter of fact, they are. This book proves it."

He picked up a volume, announcing its title, " 'Robertson's Elements of Navigation,' published 1796," and showed us the front fly-leaf.

"You see this book originally belonged to one William Bence. The name is crossed out, and underneath is written the signature in full of old Jorico. William Bence made the map, which is not characteristic of our ancestor. The compass is drawn with a draughtsman's skill. So is the outline of Trinidad. So is the nice little bird. This other thing, however, is in keeping with the horrible Jorico mnemonics which I've been showing you."

He opened a page, and there on the margin was the roughest pictorial note: a chest in rude perspective, showing the lid. On the lid the spidery figure of a man; but he had horns, and forked tail sticking out behind.

"That's how I connect up, Nicholas," said Binkie with an air of triumph. "And if you'll put all I have said together, I'm sure you'll warrant me in my conviction that somewhere in that cave in Trinidad, even today off the tourist track on account of difficulty of access, our family fortune of half a million of money bequeathed by Ancestor Jorico lies buried."

He rang a bell and wiped his forehead. The butler came in with drinks. We talked at random about Binkie's discovery. He had impressed the four of us. His method of exposition had been a bit pedantic, but no one could deny its soundness. There seemed no flaw in his argument. The only criticisms were made by young Nicholas, who had

asked if Binkie could provide him with "Whitaker's Almanac."

Binkie's library was a nightmare of books of reference. Nicholas might as well have asked him if he had such a thing in his house as a cake of soap. Binkie provided "Whitaker" at once.

"I see," said Nicholas, turning to the page about Trinidad, "that Columbus discovered the island in 1498, the Spaniards colonized it in 1588, and the British took it from them in 1797. So it must have been in a pretty ragged condition in old Jorico's time. If the cave is difficult of access even today, it must have been situated in the heart of a virgin forest over a hundred years ago. From what Whitaker says of the length and breadth of the island, the cave must be about twenty-five miles from the sea. Why should they have buried treasure so far inland, when they must have had thousands of nice hiding-holes on the coast? And how could they have got there with a big chest, anyhow?"

"That," said Binkie politely, "I must leave to your imagination. If you like to start out as a romantic writer, here's something Stevensonian to your hand. The more incredible are things you hear about people, the more probable it is that they are perfectly true. Who was it—Tertullian, I think—who said he believed because it was unbelievable? I don't go as far as that. From a mass of interrelated facts I've deduced a logical conclusion. That's all I know about it. You can take it or leave it."

"Assuming the treasure is there in the Cave des Diablotins," said Toby, "what's the next step?"

"To go and find it," said Binkie.

"That's obvious," said Hettie Dalrymple. "But who's going?"

"My cousin, Jane Crowe," said Binkie.

"What has Jane got to do with it?" I asked.

"Everything."

I saw by the twinkle in his absurd eyes, at once shrewd and childish, that he had something more to spring upon us.

"Have you told her about this treasure stunt?" Toby asked.

"Not a word." He glanced around to see whether our glasses needed replenishing, and poured himself out another drink. "But Lady Jane Crowe, as you're aware"—he turned to Hettie and Nicholas—"is a very rich woman. She has a 1,300-ton yacht, and goes all over the world in it. I've made it my business to instil into her mind the notion of a cruise this winter among the West Indian Islands. She's going. I'm so sorry she wasn't here this evening, so that I could tell her why. My duty, of course, was first to take into my confidence my three cousins here who would benefit with me equally in any discoveries. But Jane's a good sort . . ."

"One of the best," said I.

"A bit difficult, of course, like most old maids."

"Old maid?" I cried. "What are you talking about? She's a widow!"

"Pull yourself together, Tom," said Binkie.

I did. He was not so far wrong. The married life of Jane, the daughter of the Earl of Wintermere, with Horace Vanburen Crowe, of God knows what Railway Combine in America, had been of short practical duration. Whether

she tried to thrust Cloomer Castle and its ancestral and historical armour of Crusaders' maces down his throat, or whether he, treating her as a modern Danäe, half stifled her in a hail of molten dollars, I don't know; and I don't care. It's none of my business. He may have been disappointed in his ideal of the perfect-asparagus-eater among women; his darling shape in boots with knobs over the toes may have got on her nerves. Who can gauge the subtle centrifugal forces of married life? All that matters in this record is to state the fact that they separated soon after their honeymoon, that he died soon afterwards, poor chap, of typhoid through eating oysters at Monte Carlo—which none of his most fervent supporters could attribute to the cruel-heartedness of Jane—and left her his immense fortune.

That was twenty years ago. Her widowed life, as far as I was aware, had been of the most rigid austerity.

Now and again Binkie has flashes of insight. Anyone who calls Binkie a darned fool is a darneder one. Accepting Jane Crowe as a married woman, it had never struck me to allude to her as an old maid. But as I envisaged the weather-beaten Jane, I knew he was right. The woman had recaptured her virginity.

This may be a digression; but it will prepare you for Jane, who lived most of her life on a 1,300-ton yacht which could cross any of the Seven Seas.

"Difficult? Yes," I agreed. "But give her her head. . . ."

"Quite so," said Binkie.

"All the same," said I, "if you're keen on this treasure-hunting, I don't see why you can't go by yourself to Trinidad by an ordinary passenger boat."

"Don't you? It seems simple." Binkie smiled artfully. "I'd like to have my co-heirs with me, and Jane will take the whole lot of us there and back, free, gratis and for nothing!"

"You've got a nerve, Binkie," said Toby, rising. "I'll have another drink." While helping himself, he said:

"How can I plant myself on Lady Jane whom I scarcely know? Besides, how can I get away from my business?"

"And I?" said Hettie Dalrymple, whose eyes were rather bright with excitement. "I can't throw up my job."

"And I must look for one," said Nicholas gloomily. "It would be splendid. But you must cut me out."

"And you, Tom?"

"I? Where do I come in? This is your family affair, not mine."

"You'll come in as general Providence manager to Jane. Otherwise she and I'll fight like cat and dog. Your influence and co-operation will be useful in all sorts of ways. And, of course—with the consent of my three cousins taken for granted—if you come in with us—business is business, my dear fellow—you'll have a percentage on the profits of the voyage. That we can arrange privately."

In his fussy yet disciplined and methodical mind, he had the whole thing cut and dried. I saw now why he needed my services, chiefly as buffer between himself and Jane. But naturally I laughed at his fantastic business proposition. A Lieutenant-General, I had no idea of putting myself as a paid servant under the thumb of an ex-Commander of the Royal Navy.

"A pearl necklace or so," said I ironically, "and a few diamond bracelets for my wife and the girls, when you

find the treasure, will meet all my modest requirements."

In spite of Binkie's logic, I didn't believe in the treasure. But I believed in a pleasant winter trip to the West Indies in Jane's yacht, should she, of her own accord, do me the honour of inviting me. My womenfolk would let me go. They loathe the sea, having curiously queasy stomachs. But they are indulgent to me in my pursuit of incomprehensible enjoyments. I have Grand Lodge rank, for instance. Well . . .

"You'll find all your difficulties melt like snow in the sun," said Binkie pleasantly. "If you really will a thing, it's done. I'll fix up everything else for you."

He talked convincingly. Half an hour later three somewhat upset young people and a cynical elderly gentleman parted company in the street.

CHAPTER IV

Toby, incongruous genius of the place, sat in his Louis XV office, with sketches of a bridal dress on his table, and on the other side his head-woman displaying gleaming whites and ivories of materials. He had seen the bride to be, and it was for him to select the shade that would suit her colouring; to decide also on the style that would befit her figure. It was quite interesting in its way; indeed, fascinating on its artistic side; and it was also his job. And Toby had been trained to do his job for all it was worth. But when the woman and an attendant satellite went out with lengths of material and sketches, he rubbed his eyes wearily.

A man dressmaker. A rotten life, no matter how lucrative. His secretary entered, note-book in hand. She had been interrupted by the incursion of the head-woman preoccupied by the wedding-dress. With a sigh, Toby took up his letters and dictated replies. He came on a memorandum: "Postpone fitting for Lady Smith as materials have not yet come from Paris." He threw it impatiently across the table.

"Why do you bother me with this sort of thing? What have I got to do with the postponement of Lady Smith's fitting? The whole place is going to the devil."

Toby was in a bad mood. Toby was worried. All sorts of things had conspired to worry him. There was the story of Ancestor Jorico's fortune; the offered opportunity, if not of an adventure, at least of a two or three months' life

in an atmosphere breathable by man; the entirely penniless condition of his young cousin, Nicholas, who, by knocking down a headmaster had disgraced himself for the only profession for which he was fitted, and who was calling on him by appointment at any moment; and also by an extraordinary request made to him after breakfast by his man, Jones.

Like myself Toby was sceptical as to the Jorico half-million. But he had imagination. With a hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds, he could cut himself adrift from "Palmyre." He could take guns and things into the Himalayas, places inaccessible to women, and shoot bears for the rest of his natural life. He could also sketch deodars and shikarris and elephants and such-like lusty things. A hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds! Good Lord! He could buy a salmon-river in Norway. He could buy a Field-Marshalship in a South American Republic, and play amusing hell in the place. Dammit, he could fool about Turkestan, a romantic country consecrated to his imagination by his childhood's reading of Burnaby's "Ride to Khiva." He could buy a farm in Berkshire and breed pigs. There were endless possibilities of infinite happiness for the man who had a hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds.

And Binkie was so cocksure. There was no flaw in his argument. The only flaw lay in his conclusion. Where there was some five or six hundred miles of desert coast wherein to hide treasure, why did the old man Jorico bury it, with unimaginable pain and sweat, in the very middle of a virgin tropical forest? Well, there was the map, with the bird, known as the Little Devil bird. There was the chest guarded by a little devil. Binkie triumphed.

Nicholas was announced. He had passed distastefully through the soft-carpeted, scented, woman-pervaded showrooms, like a petulant young god through a nymph-haunted glade. Toby's inner sanctum seemed to afford him no greater pleasure. Toby's cordial welcome, however, disarmed him.

"Sit down—here's a cigarette." He pushed a box. "Oh yes, you can smoke here, women nearly always do. I have some special things made for me in Alexandria which they can't get anywhere else. They think there's dope in 'em. There isn't. So you're safe. Well, what about it? Tell me. You're broke . . . ?"

"To the wide," said Nicholas.

"What can you do?"

"Nothing that I'm aware of."

"Want to do anything?"

The boy flushed, and sat up. "I'm not a rotter," said he.

Toby laughed. "All right. Hit me over the head if you like. It would be against your own interests of course . . . What are you willing to do?"

"Anything to carry on," said Nicholas. "Hettie has kept me going in her flat for the past week or two. But I can't stick it much longer. I ought to be looking after her."

"Quite so," said Toby. He took his pipe out of his pocket, polished the bowl tenderly on his sleeve and put it back again. "They don't like pipes," said he. He waved away the box of cigarettes which the boy, in his turn, offered. "No, thanks. . . . Tell me, my friend, how does this place strike you? Do you like it? Be honest. You don't like it."

"I can't say I do," replied Nicholas, uncomfortable.

"But you've no Bolshevik desire to smash the windows and make a bonfire of the show and pitch the mannequins into it?"

"No-o," said Nicholas.

"Well, I have. But I've common sense, and I don't do it."

"You make lots of money out of it, Cousin Toby," said the young man, seriously.

"But you really think I'm carrying on the vanity and luxury business that marked the end of all effete civilization—Babylon, Rome, Byzantine . . . ?"

"In a way you are—yes," replied Nicholas, with an uncomfortable air of defiance. "You ask me for it. I don't mind women being prettily dressed. All the laws of human sexual attraction in all countries since the world began have sanctioned it. But this sort of thing—it's out of scale with present-day human needs. This and all that goes with it. It makes me sick."

"Glad to hear you say so," said Toby cheerfully. "So it does me. We ought to work together very well. My present book-keeper tells me she wants to transfer her incompetence to the management of a hat-shop in Putney Vale. I've been giving her five pounds a week. Can you keep books?"

"Never tried."

"Like to?"

Nicholas reflected. Much as he deprecated and wished to avert the approaching Decline and Fall of the British Empire, he couldn't achieve his end by ignominiously living on Hettie, or heroically selling toys on the curb . . . for the latter he hadn't even the qualification of being an ex-service man. He surrendered to Toby's humorous smile. It

wasn't a career, the latter explained; by no manner of means. It was an honest job, as far as it went, that would enable him to carry on until he could find some better opening for a young man of some academical distinction and with vague ambitions.

"You took the Mathematical Tripos at Cambridge," said Toby. "If you've mastered the Integral Calculus—the dam stuff with signs like the holes in fiddles . . ."

"I did that at school," said Nicholas.

"Well—all the better. If you can understand that rubbish, you'll find book-keeping pretty simple. Only I can't keep an adder-up for you. If you add up wrong you'll be thrown out. That clear?"

Apparently it was quite clear to the mind of Nicholas. He hoped that in an establishment like "Palmyre" they wouldn't boggle with farthings. The mathematical and the arithmetical brain are leagues apart. A gentleman may write you the most learned treatise on Differential Functions and the Calculus of Variations, and yet be as unable to tell you correctly the cost of seven and three-quarter yards of silk at seventeen shillings and sevenpence three farthings a yard, as a savage in Central Africa.

Perhaps the figures in my illustration may be laughed at by those who know. As the father of a family, I have an uneasy feeling that I ought to have quoted the price of silk in pounds and not shillings.

But this is by the way.

After a friendly arrangement had been concluded, Toby said:

"There's one more thing, young man, I must tell you. This isn't a confectioner's shop."

Nicholas regarded him with the wrinkled brow of puzzlement.

"What do you mean?"

"The time-honoured story. The confectioner's boy allowed at first to eat himself sick with cakes, until he loathes them and won't be tempted to touch one for anything on earth. This place is full of young women of all sorts and sizes. See? So hands off from the word 'Go.' I've nothing to do with your morals. Outside these premises you can all go to hell down whatever paths seem pleasantest. But inside, for purely business reasons, efficiency and so on, it has got to be a blooming nunnery. Understand?"

The queer searching look came into Toby's eyes, and Nicholas understood so well that he was unable to stammer out even the most honest and ingenuous of protests.

"Turn up on Monday at nine o'clock, and Miss Taylor will put you wise."

So Nicholas went away carrying in his heart both the love of Toby and the Fear of God; an excellent thing for any young man of five-and-twenty.

This was Saturday. Toby settled up affairs perfunctorily and breathed the ordinary sigh of relief as he emerged into the mild early October air of the street.

He had shaken from his feet the delicate yet asphyxiating dust of "Palmyre," and had relieved his young cousin Nicholas of his immediate necessities. Yet there was one worry left. Jones.

Jones had conducted himself of late in a queer fashion; that is to say, queer for Jones. He had taken to dressing himself up in his best on his afternoons off, and absenting

himself to the full limit of his leave. How he managed to get about Toby didn't inquire. But why Jones, who until recently had contented himself with constitutional walks in Hyde Park and occasional visits to cinema theatres, should have launched out into more remote adventure, was a mystery. At last, when apparently he considered the time had come for an explanation, he gave his master to understand that he had discovered some of his long-lost relations. They lived near Sevenoaks, in Kent. He had gone there several times by train; but only on the last excursion had he found them. Toby wondered how he could have gone by train to Sevenoaks, thereby under-rating the resource of Jones. The booking-clerk at Charing Cross station who, confronted with an obviously deaf-and-dumb man and supplied with a drawing of seven trees with an unmistakable acorn to signify their species, could have no doubt that the man wanted to go to Sevenoaks, and by his gestures that he needed a return ticket. It was as simple as all that. How, unable to read, did he know when he reached his destination? He worried his fellow-passengers with his picture. He seemed hurt by Toby's questionings. Surely, he declared, in his own way, he was a man of ordinary intelligence. Toby gracefully admitted the fact. It took a lot to defeat Jones. Yet Toby would have liked to know how, by his pictorial method, he could have obtained a ticket for Yeovil or Aberystwyth.

The only worrying part of that Saturday morning's preoccupation with Jones was his promise to drive the man down to Kent to see these relations. He had sacrificed his usual solitary and soul-cleansing week-end at his Berkshire cottage, near Newbury, where he had a bit of trout-stream

to fish in and a useful hack to ride over the downs. If it hadn't been for Jones, and incidentally Nicholas, he would be there now; for on Saturday mornings "Palmyre" could generally look after itself. And it was such a mellow, windless October day. He could have had a pleasant afternoon's rough shooting. . . . But Jones could not be refused the first favour he had ever asked. It would have been inhuman.

We see them, then, after an early and hurried lunch, side by side in Toby's comfortable two-seater car. Through the dismal tram-defaced thoroughfares of south-eastern London—New Cross, Lewisham, Bromley—the drab suburban world all a-foot or a-wheel; then at last through the leafy avenues of Kent, the sun burnishing the already golden foliage and the russet of the northern slopes. Now and then, attracting Toby's attention, Jones waved a hand at some wood-embowered manor-house and, grinning, sketched a thought. Toby smiled comprehendingly, and, with a free left-hand, sketched his reply. Yes, it was typical England in the plenitude of her beauty and her bounty—the comfortable and comforting mother of their race.

"Great," said Toby.

"Makes you feel you want to cry," said Jones in his lightning pantomime.

Toby felt very near to Jones. There was a curious spiritual appeal and response in him. Perhaps, if he could have talked and heard and written, this well of emotionality might have been dissipated in the common way of life through the ordinary channels of communication. But, thought Toby, the man so definitely cut off from communication with his fellows must have accumulated within

himself such an unrelieved well, the pressure of which might account for the many loyalties, the strange eagernesses, the indomitable self-reliance, of the terribly stricken man.

They approached Sevenoaks. Jones made an onward sign. They passed through the old sleepy town with its remaining half-timbered, gabled inns and shops. He directed a course along the Hastings Road. Then, suddenly, he touched Toby. There to the left, a hundred yards away, was a turning. Toby obeyed. A fairly wide road dwindled into a lane. A short distance further was a narrower lane to the right, which Jones decreed should be taken.

"There," signed Jones.

And there was a little workman's cottage, embowered in Virginia creeper, standing in about half an acre of ground, a few yards away from the road. There was a rickety gate shutting off a short flagged path, on each side of which straggled a most utilitarian kitchen garden. By the cottage wall a few belated hollyhocks drooped despondent. But the dominating feature, in the middle distance between the rough fence and cottage, was a girl with a spade, digging potatoes.

As the car stopped at the gate, at its sudden cessation of noise she drew herself up, and, with spade carelessly drooping from hand, regarded the newcomers under contracted wide brows.

Jones sprang from his seat, opened both the door of the car and of the gate for his master, and followed him into the garden.

Toby advanced and took off his hat to the girl, who remained rigid and unwelcoming.

"I'm afraid our friend here," said he pleasantly, "hasn't been able to explain me. He was with me for a bit during the war, and now he is my confidential servant. My name is Major Boyle."

The girl looked him up and down. She was nearly as tall as Toby.

"I don't know what he's come for, sir," she said, in a very dignified and yet respectful way. "He was here about a week ago and Mother and I thought he was mad. We were rather frightened."

Toby smiled and waved away any suggestion of terror.

"He's the best fellow in the world, and as sane as you or I. The only thing is that he was done in during the war. Mine explosion—so he's deaf and dumb. A sort of shell-shock; you've heard of that, haven't you?"

"Of course."

"He's a case of it. . . . Well, he and I have made up a sort of sign language of our own, and I gather from him that he thinks he has found some of his relatives here. He asked me to come down and interpret for him."

"I don't know of any missing relations," said the girl, "but perhaps Mother may. Will you come inside?"

She dropped the spade which she had been holding all the time, and dusted her hands on her dark blue print apron. Toby noticed that they were beautifully shaped large hands. He also noticed something else; or rather, became conscious of what hitherto he had been sub-conscious; that she was a young woman physically out of the common of girls that dig in gardens. She was tall, upright, and gave the impression of great strength. She suggested an old etching of Walter Strang's—a cherished possession of his father

—"The Potato Gatherer," in which a splendid woman in the foreground seemed to scorn the load on her back. She had a calm tanned face—neither beautiful nor coarse-featured, and strange blue eyes. Her hair was black. A type more of Western Ireland than East Anglia. She wore an old jersey, with sleeves rolled up to the elbows, and a stuff skirt.

She pushed the cottage door open for them, and they entered what obviously was the only living-room of the cottage.

An elderly woman, strong and capable-looking, not unlike her daughter, was setting out on the centre table the rough utensils for tea. A kettle simmered on the hob. The woman stared at the newcomers. The girl explained. Toby repeated his assurances of the respectability and good faith of Jones.

"Won't you sit down, sir?" said the woman.

Toby took the offered chair by the table, but Jones insisted on standing until Toby signified to him that here the rules of the army and of domestic service could be neglected.

Jones sat down on the edge of a straight-backed chair. There was a short and peculiarly awkward silence. The two women were perfectly civil, but on their guard. Toby felt rather a fool. He looked around. It was a commonplace workman's cottage living-room. A small cooking-range and a dresser with crockery proclaimed it the kitchen. An old stuffed armchair by the fire, a work-table by a window opposite the door with a sewing-machine and a pile of women's underwear, a three-tier bookcase filled with faded volumes, fixed to the wall, a few cheap prints and photo-

graphs, quite a good old mahogany grandfather's clock in a corner, and a pair of silk stockings thrown over the back of a chair beside the clock gave the impression of homely comfort.

Toby turned helplessly to Jones.

"What about it?" he asked.

Jones sighed rapidly, pointing now to the mother, now to the daughter.

"He says," Toby at last interpreted, "that he is a nephew of yours—that your sister married his father. Did you have a sister?"

The elder woman's face became stony.

"I did, sir."

Toby felt confronted with family trouble.

"You see, Mrs.——?"

"Tellifer."

"You see, Mrs. Tellifer," said Toby with his kind smile, "this poor chap since he was knocked out hasn't been able to tell anybody his name. I've tried to get at it, in all sorts of ways. For instance, he knows mine. Boyle. I could convey it to him by the picture of a kettle boiling, and so on. I've tried him with pictures of tailors and all kinds of smiths—trades you know—and in fact everything pictorial I could think of—and all no good. How could he give me any idea of your name, now?"

"A gentleman once told me," said the girl calmly, "that our name came from the Norman French, and meant 'cut iron.' "

Toby eyed her shrewdly, for she spoke in an educated way.

"I'm afraid," said he, "that Jones isn't enough of a French scholar to express it."

He turned and met Jones's intelligent yet haunted eyes. He gave him to understand that they wanted him to tell them their names as a guarantee of good faith. He held up pathetically helpless hands. As an experiment Toby drew on the little block which he always carried, a casque half cleft by a sword. Jones sprang up, his pallid face alive with excitement. He made the passes which signified to Toby France, and France only, and, taking the block, sketched the unmistakable outlines of France, and handed it to Mrs. Tellifer. Then, by way of confirmation, he took the knife from the table half-laid for tea, and made as though to cut the kitchen range.

"He knows the name right enough," said the girl, nodding with some kindness of recognition to the quivering man, who, at her sign, resumed his seat.

"I'm glad that's fixed anyhow," said Toby, with a sense of relief. "You see we're not impostors. What he really wants, I think, is to get at his own name. He knows it, of course, but can't tell us. Won't you help, Mrs. Tellifer?"

"I had a sister," said the woman. "She's dead now, but I never speak of her. Perhaps you can understand, sir. After all, even if he knows our name, that doesn't prove he's my sister's child, does it?"

It didn't. Toby glanced somewhat ruefully at the two women. Presently the girl said:

"Shall I bring the album?"

"If you like, Ruth."

That was the first time Toby had heard her name. He

followed her figure as she disappeared through the side door, probably into a bedroom. She vaguely suggested her forerunner amid the golden corn. She came back almost immediately with an antiquated bursting leather volume with a brass clasp, which she handed to Toby. He opened it idly to find, as he had expected, dreadful *cartes de visite,* as they used to be called, representing dreary people in impossible attitudes, all stuck into the slips of the album's embossed pages. As he had nothing to do with the rude forefathers and aunts and uncles of the Tellifers, he passed it to Jones. And then, in a minute, came identification.

Jones leaped excitedly to his feet and presented a page to Mrs. Tellifer—in fact, an open double page. On one side was the photograph of a grim elderly man leaning on a broken column, and on the other, that of two little girls. His signs were unmistakable. The man was Mrs. Tellifer's father. One child was the lady herself. The other was his own mother.

Toby summed up. Mrs. Tellifer yielded. From a hundred old faded photographs in the bursting family album Jones had put an unerring finger on those with which he was concerned.

"Well, well," she said, with a softened air. "So you're Sophie's son."

Jones, his pale face vividly eager, read her expression and nodded. Toby said cheerily:

"That's all right, then. Now what's his name?"

"I wish I could tell you, sir."

"Do you mean you won't, or can't?" Toby asked in his blunt yet pleasant way.

"I can't—because I don't know."

"It means such a lot to the poor fellow," Toby urged again. "His army record—to say nothing of his life record—is lost. Anything you could do for him . . . Even," he added softly, sensitive of tragedy, "if it gives you . . . if it revives painful memories."

Ruth, who had been hovering about somewhat hazily in Toby's eyes, said suddenly:

"Will you have a cup of tea, sir?"

He turned with his frank smile.

"I should love one."

He was half-conscious of the flicker of the transformation of an appraising glance into one of approval. This daughter of the soil—the might-have-been model of Strang's "Potato Gatherer"—was the least bit disconcerting in her ways.

"I'm sure you're more than welcome," said Mrs. Tellifer.

Between the respective social attitudes of mother and daughter there was a subtle difference. Toby looked from one to the other, and Jones, in his patient deafness, did the same. Ruth busied herself with the tea-things, in the preparation of which her mother had been interrupted.

Toby leaned forward. "Do tell me what you can. Perhaps I may be able to make further inquiries."

"Well, sir, it was like this," said Mrs. Tellifer.

And it was like a million other pitiful and sordid stories. Her sister Sophie had married a gentleman by the name of Tucker, who carried on a flourishing business as an undertaker at Southampton. There were no children. Then, as Toby said to me, conjecturally, the poor woman, fed up with talk of corpses and coffins at breakfast, dinner, tea and supper, bolted with somebody else; somebody in the service

of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co.; though whether a captain all over gold braid, or a stoker in dungarees, Mrs. Tellifer couldn't say. Nobody knew his name. Tucker might have found out, had he not caught his death of cold at a Vice-Admiral's mid-winter funeral when, of course he had to look his non-overcoated best, a day or two after his wife's elopement. A triumphant pneumonia carried him off before he could mention the name of his betrayer to his hastily summoned and sorrowing relatives. Rumour alone connected him with the R.M.S.P. Co. Thenceforward she had disappeared from the horizon of the Tellifer family, with no member of which did she ever after hold any kind of communication. She may have married her seducer who held some rank between Captain and stoker in the Royal Mail service. On the other hand, she may not. She may have had children, said Mrs. Tellifer. On the other hand, she may not.

Toby conversed with Jones. Mrs. Tellifer regarded them with the bent brows of one who suspects Black Magic. Ruth paused, a hand on the table, her great figure drawn up, and regarded them with some benignity. To the uninitiated onlooker—myself for instance—there was always something uncanny in the intimate Toby-Jones air language. I firmly believe that, had they been Scotsmen, they would have been able to carry on arguments about Predestination and Free Will. Anyhow, they could tell each other all sorts of things. They just sat opposite each other and waved their fingers about.

At last Toby interpreted. His father and mother had been married in the West of England; both were dead.

His father, who had followed the sea, when he was a child; and his mother during his youth.

"But hasn't he got anything to show for it?" asked Mrs. Tellifer.

Toby explained how Jones had fallen, wounded and half naked, into his trench, a hundred years ago. That was all he knew about him.

"Tea's ready," said Ruth.

She had put on the table two piles of bread and butter, one thickly cut, one cut daintily. Also a newly opened pot of damson jam.

"I'm sorry there are no cakes and things, sir," she said with a half-smile.

Toby drew himself, and waved Jones, up to the table.

"But this is lovely. What more could anyone want?"

Mrs. Tellifer poured out the tea in farmhouse way.

"Perhaps Major Boyle doesn't like milk and sugar, Mother," said Ruth.

He smiled across at her. "I love both." He was about to grab a slice of the thick bread and butter, when he caught her calm eyes. He took a thin slice.

"You're spoiling me, Miss Tellifer."

She flushed, and said in a low voice:

"I know the kind of tea you're accustomed to."

He laughed. "Still, you know, I'm quite hungry."

He helped himself to the thin bread and butter cut in his honour, and to the damson jam which he declared to be delicious. Jones, pale, mute, yet obviously excited sphinx, ate with studied decorum.

During the meal Mrs. Tellifer gave a general review of

family affairs. Her husband had been a market gardener in a fair way of business. He had died leaving her with a daughter, a tiny income, and this cottage and its acre of ground. Usually they had a girl, a distant cousin, to look after her, but she was away ill, and her daughter was taking her place.

"What does she do otherwise?" Toby asked with a smile.

"This is no life for her."

It had seemed just the very life for her as she had stood, on his first sight of her, in the fresh open air, strong and calmly defiant, spade in hand.

"She's just putting in time," the mother continued. "And I don't want her to go on much longer, as the work is spoiling her fingers."

Toby glanced at the pile of dainty women's underwear on the window table.

"I can quite understand," said he.

A while later he took up the family album. Old photographs and costumes interested him, he said. Ruth cleared away the tea-things, aided simply and efficiently by Jones. She smiled her thanks at him, and Jones's eyes grew bright.

Suddenly Toby drew from the album a large photograph cut from an illustrated weekly. He held it up with a laugh.

"What's this doing here?"

"That," said Ruth turning, "is the Countess of Duffield in Court dress."

"I know," said Toby. "I designed it."

She regarded him perplexed.

"The dress came from 'Palmyre.' "

"How do you know?"

"I was her ladyship's maid for five years."

"Oh," said Toby. That explained the absence of many rusticities in the general demeanour of the potato digging girl. He laughed. "We've each found a guarantee of good faith, apart from Jones. I happen to be 'Palmyre,' and to have designed Lady Duffield's Court dress."

"Oh!" she said, in her turn; and then, with an air of calm friendliness, "you're *that* Major Boyle, are you, sir?"

He nodded somewhat ruefully. "Yes. I'm that Major Boyle."

"I've often heard her ladyship speak of you," said Ruth.

"Just fancy, now!" exclaimed Mrs. Tellifer.

Toby told Jones of the little discovery. The man expressed his delight, and again Ruth smiled on him. He pointed to heaven, and with his finger sketched to Toby's practised eye an obvious picture of the veiled Madonna, such as one meets with in any Roman Catholic church or book of devotion.

"My God!" said Toby to himself, "the fellow's not far out." But he fell to wondering where the devil he had seen a blue-eyed Madonna of a lady's maid? He gave it up. It was time to go. He put in, perhaps unnecessarily, a plea for Jones, the waif and stray indubitable cousin. No matter how unskilled they were in sign language, his swift intelligence would soon make communication easy. He was such a good fellow.

Silently and almost imperceptibly Jones had washed up the tea-things, hung the cups on the dresser nails, and tidied up the kitchen grate.

"Will you tell him, sir," said Mrs. Tellifer, "that he'll be welcome whenever he likes to come?"

"And you, Miss Tellifer," said Toby, "perhaps you

might give him an hour or two of healthy digging."

She laughed outright for the first time; for Toby could put now and then a humorous twist on his brown face.

"It would be a godsend, sir."

"Then all's well," said Toby cheerily. "Good-bye. And a thousand thanks for your great kindness and hospitality."

The women went out to the gate to see them off. They drove away.

Toby told me about all this a day or two later.

"It's only an unlucky devil like Jones who would be in this position. He has established himself as a cousin of Ruth Tellifer, and neither she nor her mother have any idea of his name."

"Striking girl, this Ruth Tellifer, you say," I remarked.

Toby waved an impatient hand.

"I've told you about her. How she has carried on in the middle of all this female cat vanity which I've got to do with—I know I'm prejudiced, but that's the side of 'em I'm up against all the time—and the Duffield woman is just hell's delight in the shop—the worst type—how the girl moulds herself to it is beyond my comprehension."

"Your ignorance of woman, my dear Toby," said I, with an air of venerable wisdom, "is colossal."

"Thank the good and merciful God!" said Toby, pulling out his pipe.

CHAPTER V

As far as a back-number like myself can judge, the immediate post-war generation may be divided into two classes. One comprises those who say: "The war was brought about by those who begot us. They lost all their money and landed us in filthy conditions. Let us devote our energies to having the best time we can, for tomorrow another war may come along, and we'll all die." Another class takes life more seriously, and realizes that it is their own vital concern to establish such a state of things mundane as to render war a possibility only conceivable by the criminally insane. Personally, I think that, apart from various temporary inconveniences resulting from general upheaval, the funny old world is much the same as ever it was. But then, you see, my day is done. No matter how soon the next war came, they wouldn't give me a job even in the mule remount department. As "O. C. Pigeons" they wouldn't have me. We're all exploded, empty shell-cases, the whole lot of my crowd; a fact which the old buffers in the service clubs won't recognize. At the risk of setting myself down as a braggart egoist, I do recognize it. That's why I think Toby continues to respect my opinions. The only way for a man in my position to keep alive is to concentrate his life-interest on the thoughts, feelings, despairs and aspirations of the younger folk. It's they, poor devils, not we, who have to carry on. . . .

In the good old days, the old dogs of the services were

quite justified in declaring that the Country was going to the Devil. In their inmost hearts they knew it was doing no such thing. They only wanted to keep the younger generation up to the mark. It was patriotic. Today, for us to be mumbling toothless *laudatores temporis acti,* is to constitute ourselves a mildewed blight of anti-patriots on the body politic.

Perhaps I am divagating from my original proposition: the division into two categories of the young folk born just after the year 1900. It was to the second, the serious, category that my young friend Nicholas belonged. For one thing, he had never had a good time in his young life. There was no money to have it with.

To which category my two girls belong, God only knows. The wise man leaves the psychology of his womankind alone. All that matters to me is that they're very clean-run young women, who will marry when it suits them—and in the meanwhile combine with their mother in strenuous effort to make me comfortable. What more can a man want? They also welcomed Nicholas, whom I asked to the house, soon after our meeting at Binkie's, and adopted him as a tame and useful young male about the place. I've seen my wife adopt A.D.C.'s in the same cheery and unashamedly selfish way.

Anyhow, that is how I knew Nicholas, a youth thoroughly well bred, kindly disposed, but umbrageous, a hundred-year throwback to the Byronic temperament.

He was none too happy in the "Palmyre" counting-house. The chief of the department was a grim woman, a Miss Torkington—a life-long friend of his aunt, Toby's mother—who had a small financial interest in the business.

He discovered that in a large concern like "Palmyre" there was far more accounting to do than that required by keeping day-book and ledger of customers' bills and totting them up accurately. "Palmyre" was an important buyer, as well as a seller, and Invoices—a term which he had vaguely associated with shipping—flooded his desk. They referred to materials with fantastic names, coming from the ends of the civilized earth. There were Customs House forms on peculiarly beastly paper, relating to duty that must be paid. Any human interest that might have been derived from it all was sucked dry before the figures reached him, by Miss Torkington.

"She treats me like a calculating boy, an arithmetical Robot, and curses me because nobody taught me to write like a machine."

"You're earning an honest living anyhow," said my daughter Viola, who inherits her mother's profound common sense.

"Breaking up stony figures by the roadside. That's what it comes to."

"You can always rob the till," said Viola.

"Even Hettie's more sympathetic than you are," declared Nicholas angrily.

"Hettie's your sister. Whether it's duty on her part or sloppiness, not having a brother, I can't say."

At this stage of the conversation I moved my newspaper and myself into another room.

He was careful not to betray any dissatisfaction to Toby on whom, of course, in Hanover Street, he scarcely set eye. Toby sat enshrined in his disgusting room and guarded by a regiment of female dragons. From repeated talk with

my family, I gather that he disapproved of Toby as a male dressmaker, on principle: but that, as a man, he went in wholesome terror of him. I heard that Viola said once:

"If you want Toby to love you, do your job to the best of your ability. If you want him to throw you out just sudden-like, tell him you've got the higher mission to put the world straight."

I don't know whether that's the way modern young women endear themselves to prospective husbands. Perhaps Nicholas couldn't be regarded as a prospective husband. Anyhow, he vowed he detested the sight of her. He abandoned her apparently for my younger girl, Eva, who for good reasons of her own, couldn't be bothered with him. My wife, grown tender-hearted with the years, upbraided Viola.

"My dear," said I, "didn't you once give me the same hell of a time for my soul's good? I rather think it was in Peshawar."

Well, that's neither here nor there. The boy, apparently, did his work to Toby's satisfaction, and held himself aloof, with what expenditure of effort one knows not, from the set of peculiarly attractive young women who of necessity form the crew of a fashionable dressmaker's shop. He continued to live with Hettie, paying for his board and lodging, which was a comfortable arrangement for both. Being of a mechanical turn of mind and more or less scientifically trained, he developed, by means of all sorts of gadgets, a marvellous installation out of a cheap wireless set, and this occupied his ingenuous leisure. One of these days, he declared, in his enthusiasm, he would be able to get China. Why anyone should want to get China is be-

yond my comprehension. I was once stationed in China. One day he said to us:

"If only I could lay my hands on two or three thousand pounds to buy what I want and shut myself up for a year or so, I think I could get pretty near it. The whole thing really is in its infancy. Somebody of my generation will carry it on beyond the dreams of Marconi, so why shouldn't it be me? You see," he went on . . .

"I'm sorry, my dear boy," said I, after he had gone on for some time with a technical disquisition, "that I don't see, nor do your aunt and cousins"—we had admitted him to brevet relationship—"although they politely pretend to be interested. We're too damned ignorant. But we all think it's a splendid idea of yours. . . ."

"Especially if you could do it, overcoming all obstacles, without the two or three thousand pounds," said my wife, encouragingly.

Viola interrupted with the irreverent remark that her mother talked like a dreadful fellow called Helps or Smiles, who wrote books about that sort of thing. My own mind diverged into two currents; one led to the opinion that there was nothing like a scientific obsession to keep the boy immune from the beguilements of the crew of "Palmyre" —and if you think that a perfectly desirable young man can be dropped, say as purser's assistant, into such a crew, no matter how haughty, without any beguiling processes being set in motion, you are very much mistaken: the other led to Ancestor Jorico.

"If you believe Binkie," said I, "you'll have not a paltry two thousand, but a hundred thousand to play with."

"Oh, Binkie!" He shrugged contemptuously. But there was a gleam in his eyes all the same.

Much later, my wife said to me alone:

"If Nicholas did get this share of the fortune it mightn't be a bad thing."

"My God, woman!" I cried, after the manner of my illustrious exemplar, Mr. Shandy. "Do you realize the ultimate ambition of that young man?"

"No."

"The propagation of the human race by wireless telegraphy."

She turned her back on me. Now I come to think of it, perhaps her irritation was not unjustified.

This seems, up to now, to be a ragged sort of cinema presentation of things. But, you see, I must keep up with the people who are part of the story. There's a whole autumn to get through, months during which they were all working and struggling and cursing life, and hoping and dreaming and carrying on meanwhile with the daily round and common task which is the lot of humanity.

For all their affectation of scepticism Binkie's discovery of the Jorico treasure unconsciously coloured and disturbed the lives of his three cousins. Toby grew restless.

"Why the blazes don't we start? I've fixed up things so that I can leave the beastly business any day, for a couple of months."

"More schemes," said Binkie soothingly—they were lunching somewhere together—"are ruined by impatience than by anything else."

"But what's the patience for?" asked Toby.

"Jane Crowe isn't quite ready," Binkie admitted. "We must naturally await her pleasure and her ordinary convenience."

Toby damned Jane Crowe and all her concerns. A cloud passed over Binkie's sunlit iceberg of a face.

"Lady Jane's not an easy woman to deal with."

"Well, that's your funeral, anyhow," said Toby. "But I'd like to know as soon as possible. I've got to put Miss Torkington in charge and some of her work must fall on young Nicholas."

"But he's going too."

"The devil he is!"

"I told you that night it was to be a family affair."

Toby blasphemed. Did Nicholas know of this?

"Hettie Dalrymple does, at any rate. She's making arrangements with her paper for a holiday."

Toby next went round to see Hettie. Yes, she was going on the trip. Nicholas took it for granted that he would be left behind.

"Only one with common sense among the lot of us," said Toby. And a little later, after discussion of the treasure: "You're looking ill. You've got this damfoolery on your nerves."

"But a hundred thousand pounds!" cried Hettie.

The nerves of the four were all on edge.

At the beginning of December I ran into my cousin Jane at a restaurant party. She was dressed in perfectly feminine good taste. She was a woman who never offended by aping

masculine attire in any way, although she strode about, bony and gaunt, like a man in skirts.

"What about Binkie's voyage, on which I seem to be invited?" I asked.

She laughed good-humouredly. "Binkie and his family treasure! The dear fussy ass is worrying my life out. Thinks he's diplomatic and is getting round me. I'd planned to take *Nautilus* this winter out to the West Indies, and told him so when he began talking about some mysterious expedition. I generally go alone. Hate people on board—especially women—generally get seasick. Anyhow, I said I'd take his crowd if he could persuade you to come along. Toby Boyle I've met. Quite a good chap. But the others——" She shrugged. "One apparently is a woman. Now it appears it's an idiot hunt for buried treasure."

"Binkie seems to have chapter and verse for it," I said. "And it's not unromantic."

"Nothing to do with me," replied Jane Crowe. "I'll take 'em there and back, no matter what the weather's like. If they're in their bunks all the time, so much the better!"

"Do you include me?" I asked.

She smiled kindly. "A dried-up old faggot like you doesn't get sick. . . . But I'd like you to impress upon Binkie the fact that I'm Owner and my captain's *the* Captain and that he, Binkie, is nothing but a damn passenger."

I was rather amused by our little talk. I had gathered from Binkie that he had invited me to save him from Jane. Jane more or less declared that she was asking me in order to save her from Binkie. To one possessing a spice of malice the voyage seemed to promise entertainment.

"I've given sailing orders for the 6th January," said

Jane. "But you'd all better dine with me first. I'll telephone round and fix up an evening."

The dinner took place the next week at her big house in Park Street. There were only the prospective yachting party, and my wife and daughters. Thank God, Jane likes my wife. Viola and Eva she regarded as rudimentary appendages, like the two buttons at the back of a man's tail-coat. But she was exceedingly polite in her brusque way to everybody. She made Toby sit on her right, and Nicholas on her left, being fed up, she declared, with Binkie and myself. To young Nicholas, somewhat overawed by the atmosphere of careless opulence, she made herself very agreeable. She had a way of pulling out your secret from you and holding it up and saying: "Well, what's wrong with it? Give it a bath and plenty of fresh air and it'll be as right as rain." In a quarter of an hour she had turned Nicholas inside out, showed him what a clean inside he had, and strengthened him joyously to cope with his other neighbour, Viola.

I wouldn't do more than chronicle as a mere fact this commonplace dinner-party were it not that, before the evening ended, Lady Jane Crowe fell in love with Toby; which is germane to the story.

Now when I say "fell in love," I'm not suggesting the romantic sexual passion of a woman of three-and-fifty for a man of thirty-five. I used the phrase *en tout bien et tout honneur*. Sex entered it, of course. So it must enter into the relations of mother and son, brother and sister. I want to make this clear from the start. At any rate, that is my opinion. If I'm wrong, then I'm the most guileless old in-

nocent who ever spent his working years in Anglo-Indian society and at the Courts of Indian princes.

Practically the first words addressed to me, when we drove home, were:

From Viola: "The way Lady Jane fell for Toby . . ."

From Eva: "Sloppy over him."

I give you these comments by the younger generation for what they are worth. To me personally they suggested but a vague standard of attraction. Also the idea of weather-beaten, hard-bitten, stringy-muscled, keen-eyed, thin-lipped Jane Crowe relaxing into sloppiness over a young man, appeared to me as humorous. But, without any shade of disguise, she manifested her delight in Toby.

They had met, as distant relations, at far intervals, at odds and ends of times; but this was the first occasion on which they met, as it were, heart to heart.

"I haven't been to your shop, and I haven't sent anybody to it," she said.

"Thank God!" said Toby.

"Why?"

"I prefer women I like to keep out of it. As soon as they come in, I loathe 'em."

"That's not the way to make money."

Toby's queer look came into his eyes.

"Who said I was out to make money? I've got to make an honest living, and this is the only way I've struck yet. That's all there is to it."

"Don't be angry"—she touched his arm in friendly fashion. "I'm blatant or I'm nothing. And so are you."

Whereupon they both laughed, and Jane began to dig into Toby. And very soon she dug out Jones, in whose pre-

historic remains—isn't the war, these days, prehistoric?—she was vastly interested. And somehow Jones led to the mention of Ruth Tellifer, who had accepted Jones as a matter-of-fact cousin (welcome there whenever he visited the cottage), and once took tea with him and Mrs. Baxter, Toby's housekeeper, in the Mount Street flat. From this they divagated into other paths no less interesting to Jane.

During the ladies' interval after dinner, she made herself very pleasant—so I learned—to Hettie Dalrymple, plump and blushing and shyly on the defensive. When the men came into the drawing-room she listened, ironically courteous, to the impatient Binkie, threw a few kind words to my unimportant self, and then, hostess duty over—to quote my daughter Viola's semi-intelligible language—"wallowed in Toby for the rest of the evening."

After that Toby saw a good deal of her. One evening she dined in Mount Street with Toby and his father, Mr. Wilfrid Boyle, C.B. Mr. Boyle was a retired Civil servant, a man of scholarly tastes and courtly manners. He was an authority on Browning, and occupied much of his elegant leisure on a critically annotated edition of the poet's works. An accomplished bridge player, he played a few rubbers every afternoon at his club. He found sufficient social relaxation in attending the public dinners of the various learned societies with which he was connected. Lady Jane found him a man of charming fastidiousness, an odd contrast to the brown and muscular Toby. Although father and son had little in common they seemed to be very proud of each other.

"Before I set the seal of liking on people," she remarked to me later, "I want to see them in their own setting."

Well, she saw Toby in his club smoke-room of a den, in his father's elegantly appointed little library, and in the dining-room, evidently a compromise of tastes. But—what was of greater importance—she saw Jones; Jones keen, deft, unerringly efficient. She was the kind of woman alert to deep things in life, on whom Jones would make an impression. She had met a thousand suave dilettanti like Mr. Wilfrid Boyle. But Jones was new. The aerograph language delighted her. Her formidable angularity relaxed, and she became almost womanly when Toby tried to explain it.

"He knows we're talking about him." He caught Jones's eye and spoke. Jones smiled respectfully and replied. "I've told him I was teaching you how we talk. He says he's glad her ladyship is interested."

She held up a protesting hand.

"Oh no! How the deuce, if he's deaf and dumb and all the rest of it, does he know I'm a 'ladyship'?"

Toby laughed in pleasant triumph. "I told him who you were before you came."

"I suppose I've got to believe you," said Jane.

Presently she said: "I've left my bag in your smoke-room. Do you think he could get it for me?"

Toby conveyed the message in a few lightning passes, and Jones retired and came back at once with her ladyship's bag on a silver tray. She smiled up her acknowledgment very graciously.

"I didn't mean expressly to put him through his tricks. I really wanted my bag. Not to powder my nose. Gad, no! But my own cigarettes. Everybody thinks they're filthy—perhaps they are. My own mixture of Dubec, Périque and

French Maryland. The man, somewhere in the West End, who makes them for me, says: 'For God's sake, my lady, don't tell anyone where they come from.' So I never give him away." She turned to the senior Boyle. "Do you mind if I smoke between courses? I'm sure you hate it, but it makes me so much more amiable."

"Far from hating it, my dear Lady Jane," said Mr. Boyle, "I'll have one myself." And he took one out of a slender gold case.

Toby looked on in admiration, knowing that if there was one modern habit he loathed more than the rest, it was that of smoking during meals.

Later, Lady Jane returned to the incomparable Jones.

"What are you going to do with him when you come on this voyage? Leave him here? But you're used to him, aren't you? You'd be at a loose end without him. Why not bring him along? That's to say, if Mr. Boyle wouldn't be left stranded."

"Indeed, no!" said Mr. Boyle. "There's a house-maid called Emma who attends to my modest wants. I can speak her language. With Jones I'm a hopeless failure. I'm singularly lacking in the sense of draughtsmanship. If I think I'm doing in the air a pair of boots, he smiles intelligently, and brings me trousers. We're very good friends, Jones and I, but we're mutually unintelligible."

"In the way of human kindness," laughed Toby, "my father is very fond of Jones. But for practical purposes, he has no use for him."

"Then that's settled," said Lady Jane. "Bring him along. He can valet Tom, too, who can't afford to carry a man about. Tom'll adore Jones. But keep him clear of Binkie.

Binkie'll try to cure him. He always has an infallible recipe for everything. 'Shell-shock, shell-shock? Good God! Any fool knows how to cure shell-shock these days. Stick his feet in iced water for four hours a day, and make him drink a gallon of thin soup made out of bloaters and tripe—fresh tripe mark you—with a dash of cinnamon in it—and he'll be cured in a week.' "

Toby laughed.

"You seem to know Binkie."

"Know him? Didn't I once catch him as a child folding up my little sister's dolls' clothes, and putting them away tidily in the house?"

"Pernicketty—but not a bad sort," said Toby.

"Bad sort? Of course he has his good qualities," she admitted. "If he hadn't, I wouldn't saddle myself with him for a couple of months. But pernicketty, yes. . . . The poor girl who married him and ran away with another fellow has all my sympathy. I sent her a Christmas present a day or so ago. But we've lost sight of Jones. Keep him out of Binkie's way. If he doesn't bring a man, there are lots of people on board to look after him. If he doesn't like 'em, I'll put my old maid, Elvira, on to him. . . ."

"Is Elvira a character too?" asked Toby.

"You wait, my dear," said Lady Jane in high good humour. "You think you know a lot of things; but when you come aboard *Nautilus,* you'll learn a lot more."

When, eventually, Toby, going down with her in the lift, accompanied her to the door of her car, she turned and said:

"I've had a lovely evening. Perhaps because you've let

me talk all the time. Anyhow, I know that you and I and Jones are going to be great friends."

Toby returned to his father, enthusiastic.

"Isn't she a perfect old dear?"

"Yes, quite old and quite dear," said the delicate, withered gentleman, "but don't you think, my dear boy, there's a superfluity of the ego in her cosmos?"

CHAPTER VI

A FEW days after this a fog, dense and terrible, the first of the winter, descended on London and turned it into a blinding and suffocating horror. It had begun as a thin mist at two o'clock in the afternoon, and had gradually thickened until, at five, it became impenetrable to light.

Dismay filled the murky halls of "Palmyre." Rumours came that omnibuses had ceased running, that all taxi-cabs had groped a dangerous garageward way. How were the myriad young women of "Palmyre," most of whom lived in suburbs, to get home? The question was put to Toby by Miss Torkington.

"How the devil do I know? You're not suggesting I should escort the whole lot to their several destinations?"

"You might suggest something," said Miss Torkington.

"Feed 'em and sleep 'em, my dear Emilia," said Toby. "As many as want you to. There are heaps of shops round about that'll send in provisions; and God knows there are enough divans and cushions about to accommodate a harem in a cinema production."

"But the expense——"

Toby damned the expense, and bade her find a simpler solution of the problem. As this was beyond her power, he sent for Nicholas.

"Look here, my boy; you've got to get busy."

He rapped out his orders in the clear way that had made him the perfect staff officer.

"Understand?"

"Of course. But it's a beast of an evening. What shall I do?"

"What the hell you like," said Toby. "Except join the ladies. I can't bother with you. I've got my own funeral to attend to."

Whereupon Toby took hat and coat and plunged into the fog. His way was familiar—Hanover Street, Brook Street, the east side of Grosvenor Square, Carlos Place, Mount Street; but to an accustomed blind man the round would have been easier. He lost his way in Mount Street and had to retrace his steps to a corner of the road and count the gaps that indicated doors.

"They tell me, sir," said the lift-man, "that the whole railway system of England is blocked."

"Thank Heaven the old lift can still find its way up," laughed Toby.

The London lift-man, in spite of dreary occupation, is encyclopædic in knowledge and appreciative of the tiniest crumb of a jest.

"Gawd 'elp the poor folks out in trains, sir," said he.

Toby rang the bell of his flat door. It was opened not, as usual, by Jones, but by a tall young woman neatly attired, hat and all, in conventional clothes. He started back for a second. The world could not be so befogged that he should mistake the door of his own flat.

"I'm Ruth Tellifer, sir," said the young woman.

"Oh," said Toby. "Of course. Thanks for letting me in. But where's Jones?"

"I'm afraid Jones has met with a slight accident, sir," she said, helping him off with his overcoat. "Oh, nothing serious. A sprained ankle, I think."

"I'm sorry, but he isn't dead, anyhow," said Toby. "Do you know anything about my father, Mr. Boyle?"

For Toby, having telephoned in vain to club and flat for news of his father and hearing none, was anxious.

"He is here, sir. Came in a few minutes ago."

"Thank goodness," cried Toby. "Look. Go in here, and I'll come back presently and you'll tell me all about it."

He threw open his sitting-room door for her and went straight to the library, where he found Mr. Boyle peacefully smoking a cigar over a novel.

"Do you know you've given me a beast of a fright?" said Toby.

The withered gentleman explained. He had lunched with friends at the Connaught Hotel, once the Coburg, which, as all the world knows, stands at the end of Mount Street. He had spent an agreeable afternoon at bridge and, with the help of the Commissionaire who had seen him across the road, had found no difficulty in getting home.

Toby went into his sitting-room and switched the lights full on, poked the fire, and turned to the respectfully standing Ruth.

"If your mother gives you as much trouble as my father does me, I'm sorry for you. Do sit down. What about Jones's broken neck? Tell me."

It was a simple story. She had come up from the country to lunch and go to the pictures with Jones. It was the one form of entertainment in which he met the world on even ground. She was beginning to understand Jones, she said. . . . There was not much fog when they entered the cinema; but when they came out, it was black. The cinema

was the one in Regent Street. His intention had been to see her into her train at Charing Cross; but the fog suggested the Oxford Circus Tube. On the way thither he had stumbled on a curb, and either broken, sprained, or twisted his ankle. She, insisting on seeing him home, had supported him hopping all the way to Mount Street.

"What's the beggar's excuse for falling over a curb in a fog? That he's deaf and dumb?"

At first the girl looked somewhat shocked at apparent callousness; then she caught the kindly gleam in his eyes and laughed.

"I'll go and look at him," said Toby.

Jones was in bed, and Mrs. Baxter, the housekeeper, was in attendance, putting on cold-water compresses. His face and hands conveyed abject apology. He could not have been more criminally self-conscious had he been detected in the act of pawning his master's shirt. Toby told him not to be a damned fool. Their aerograph for a damned fool is a sign known only to themselves and an Omniscient Deity. Jones did his best to obey Toby, who, having learned odds and ends of first aid during the war, diagnosed from the black, blue and swollen ankle no fracture. A neighbouring doctor would come as soon as the fog allowed. Meanwhile Jones was still anxious. How could Ruth, for whose security he alone was responsible, get to Charing Cross in order to catch a train for Sevenoaks, and thence how could she find her way in the fog for the mile and a half that lay between Sevenoaks Station and her mother's cottage?

Said Toby—how he did it I don't pretend to know, but he did:

"I've got people out of tighter places than this in my time, and if you know of a more efficient company-commander, you'd better go out and find him."

Whereupon Jones apologized, and Toby went back to the waiting Ruth.

"It's all right. No bones broken as far as I can see. He's worrying about you and the fog. But I've taken charge. Sit down and let us see what can be done about it."

Their eyes met. They were four very honest eyes. Yet in each pair was a shadow of perplexity. Toby could easily have taken her to his flat door and said: "Turn to the left and follow Down Street and you'll find a perfectly good Tube station from which you can get anywhere." But he didn't. He began to test her knowledge of London, which was elementary. She was country bred. Most of her service with Lady Duffield had been passed in Worcestershire, Rome and Cannes. Only two months of the year had she spent at the London house in Onslow Gardens. The Fulham Road, Knightsbridge, Piccadilly, Bond Street, South Molton Street—the latter a most important thoroughfare where her ladyship bought hats and complexions and hair wavings—Buckingham Palace and the other Palace at Hammersmith where one danced—that was all she knew of London.

Now, you may think that the problem with which Toby grappled, namely, how to assure the transport of an outwardly calm but inwardly agitated young woman, in a dense fog, from the west end of London to a remote Kentish cottage, is one so trivial as to be unworthy of the notice of the serious chronicler of human destinies. But the commonplace resolution of this problem had a great deal to do with the ultimate disposal of the Jorico Fortune. I mention

this with some emphasis, lest you may think I am wandering into a morass of foolish detail.

So you visualize an apparently uninteresting situation. There's the big leather-furnished, comfortable, undistinguished bachelor's room; a book-case or two holding any kind of old books, sloppily and leaningly grouped; a leather-covered untidy table of no kind of period, with fittings disposed according to the taste of Jones; a mirror or two; a few water-colours—rather good when you came to look into them; a leather-topped brass fender-seat in front of a blazing fire. There's Toby, brown-skinned, brown-eyed, loosely clad in brown tweeds, lounging in an arm-chair. There's quite a remarkable young woman, with the facial contours of the quattrocento Madonna, and the big bodily curves of a modern Atalanta. He is smoking a pipe, a consoling siphon and decanter and a glass of whisky-and-soda beside him on an incongruous brass tray supported by a Moorish mother-of-pearl inlaid stool. She, sitting more or less on the edge of a comfortable arm-chair on the other side of the fire.

You see, there had to be a discussion.

Now, if an old soldier, suspected I'm sure by my daughters of the beginnings of senile decay, may give a word of advice to young men, it is this:

Never discuss anything with a woman, old or young. Either make her go the way you want, or let her go the way she wants. Both ways lead to happiness. But the middle-path is the most dangerous you can tread. You in your way, and she in hers reach out, each to other, utterly absurd and unknown antennæ of sex, which grip you each in all kinds of different ways, and then there's the devil to pay.

The situation lasted a considerable time. The situation was one not devoid of interest to the disputants. Toby's trained eye took in her lines and her grace. Ruth felt conscious of the power behind his easy charm, and gradually lost her prim class-shyness.

"The best thing for you to do," said Toby, "is to put yourself in charge of Mrs. Baxter who will fix you up for the night."

"But there's my mother, I tell you," said Ruth. "If I don't get home tonight she'll go out of her mind."

"There's a perfectly good police force in England," said Toby. "I'll see what can be done with them."

He went out, leaving a greatly perplexed and yet perhaps a trustful young woman. The tragic adventure with Jones in the fog had shaken her nerves. The warmth and glow of the comfortable room were grateful. She told him later that she felt like a stray cat some kind person had taken in and soothed with a saucer of warm milk. But even into this closely curtained place the fog stole insidiously like the poison gas of which she had heard as a child during the war. The thought of facing its unspeakable terror dismayed her. Men and beasts, fire and tempests—with those she could cope. She was as strong as a dozen men and had a brain as quick as anyone. But she quailed before the thirty miles of fog over the unknown Land between Mount Street and her home. She lay back for the first time in the great leather chair, and surrendered herself to despairing trust in Toby. I may here mention that Jones had somewhat exaggerated his master's heroic qualities and military distinctions. He could only convey to outsiders the idea of Toby's importance by means of his swift pencillings; and

if, in order to emphasize his point, he depicted Toby's broad chest covered with decorations, from the Victoria Cross down to a special constable's medal, he is not too greatly to be blamed. At any rate, Ruth was much impressed.

When Toby burst into the room ten minutes or so afterwards, she sprang hurriedly to her respectful pose in the chair.

"Don't do that," he cried. "You looked so comfortable. It's all right."

He had got on to the Police Inspector at Sevenoaks. Fog! There was a fog all over the Channel. Trains were creeping about like lost children, with no one to take them home. They couldn't run, for fear of bumping into another child. She hadn't a dog's chance of reaching Bittle, the hamlet on whose outskirts she dwelt. But—here came in the fatherly kindness and the efficiency of the English police—the Inspector would instruct the Bittle constable, fog or no fog, to deliver to Mrs. Tellifer the reassuring message, which the Inspector had taken down at his, Toby's, dictation.

"I said the Bittle constable and you had played together as children."

She started. "How did you know that?"

"I didn't," said Toby. "But I felt sure of it."

That was Toby's way. While writing about Toby I almost wish I could have a command in another war, if only to have the joy of Toby on my staff again.

"So you're all right," said he. "And your mother's all right. And my father has found from the Red Book that there's a doctor within safe crawling distance who'll come and see Jones, so Jones is all right. And Emma, the house-

maid—it's her night off—has rung up from her parents' shop in Putney to ask whether she can stay there till the morning. So she's all right. And her room's vacant. Therefore you see, my dear girl, God continues to reside in His Heaven, and all's right with the world."

And so, after a little desultory talk, he rang the bell for Mrs. Baxter.

He changed into an old and comfortable dinner suit and a soft fronted shirt and went in to dinner with his father more austerely attired. Ruth stood awaiting them as parlour-maid.

"Look here," cried Toby. "It's very sweet of you, but I didn't expect—didn't want you to do this."

She smiled in her proud, imperturbable way.

"I'd like to do it, sir, if you don't mind."

It was a simple, well-cooked, well-served little meal. Towards the end Mr. Boyle said:

"My boy, I've nothing to say against Jones. He's no doubt a capital fellow—faithful and all the rest of it—but he's as remote from me as a Martian. Whereas this young person—although a bit unparlour-maidy in her mufti, as it were—walking noiselessly about like a young goddess, and speaking our language, is the ideal attendant on two lone men like ourselves. She fills the eye."

Toby laughed. "You must make the most of it this evening, my dear. It's her first and last appearance."

The withered gentleman smiled responsively.

"That is one of the penalties of age, my dear Toby. The older one grows, the more evanescent are the minor delights of life."

They parted soon after dinner. Mr. Boyle retiring to his

library and annotations of Browning, Toby to fireside comfort and a novel. Life, in spite of the world of women in which he lived, had its compensations. Ease of body and soothing of mind were good things. Any cares that afflicted the day lurked outside somewhere in the fog. Even Jones ceased to be a subject for anxiety. The doctor had come and confirmed his diagnosis. No bones broken. A mere sprain which a few days' rest and treatment would cure. Toby lost himself in his book.

At ten o'clock, the usual hour of Jones's appearance, there entered Ruth with decanter, siphon and glass. Then she made up the fire. Toby thanked her. Since she wanted to play Jones, why not let her play Jones?

"I've put out your things, sir," she said with a vague sign towards his bedroom along the passage. "Can I do anything else?"

"Yes," smiled Toby. "You can give Jones to understand that if he gets up before the doctor lets him, I'll cut his throat. And you can go to bed and not worry about your mother. She's now under the protection of the Kent County Police. I suppose, anyhow, it's a bit lonely where you are," he added after a pause.

"Very lonely," said Ruth. "Especially these days when tramps and suchlike think nothing of murdering people for sixpence. If there are two, you see, they don't come."

"I shouldn't think anyone would risk it when you were about, Miss Tellifer," said Toby with a laugh.

I learned much later, no matter how, as it's neither here nor there, that she appreciated the recognition of her amateur status implied in the formal address. I found, when I came to see something of her, an inherent breeding

that made her sensitive to shades of manner and sentiment.

She lifted her shoulders and smiled at the compliment to her obviously muscular efficiency.

"No. It's only a question of being two. A thief's a low coward. If he attacks one woman, there's the other woman to squeal and possibly give an alarm. . . . After the first of January," she went on, "it won't be so difficult, as the girl will be back to stay with mother. And of course I'll be able to get something to do." She moved quickly to the door, as though conscious of having overstepped conventional limits of gossip between servant and master. "Thank you very much, sir, for being so kind to me. Good night, sir."

"Good night. Hope you'll be comfortable," replied Toby from his arm-chair.

He repressed an absurd impulse to spring up and open the door for her. But instinctively he obeyed a wise convention. A slight wave of the hand and a smile sufficed to convey an exact shade of mutual relations. . . . He had a fleeting glimpse of her standing in the doorway, tall and big-boned, in her cheap yet tasteful stuff dress, her shapely legs beneath, her dark hair drawn back clean with a medial parting, her oval face and her eyes all calm and her lips ever so little twisted in a smile.

Afterwards to me, in confession or confidence or what you will, Toby declared:

"You've no idea how one's infernal professional instincts play the fool with one. I spent the rest of the evening thinking what kind of a pageant costume I could design for her."

All this foregoing palaver, as I have already said, is germane to my story. You shall see.

On the second of January I had a telephone talk with Jane Crowe. Would I go round to see her? Having nothing else to do, I did.

As I entered the drawing-room, she advanced towards me dramatically.

"Here's a pretty state of things!"

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Hell's the matter. I can't sail on the 6th."

"Why?"

"Elvira's wife's mother is sick of a palsy. You know what I mean. Some member of her dismal family has got St. Vitus's dance or measles . . . She's always letting me down over family illness, but never on a cruise. This time she can't leave her mother. Dying of cancer. Can't blame her. Wouldn't leave mine . . ." Jane has her own way of going plump from the fantastic into kindly common sense. "But you see what it means? I hate women on board. I've been telling you all along. But I can't do without Elvira. She's not a woman. She's a virago. When she appears on deck the whole ship's company bolt below, like rats. But she suits me. Dammit, even a sort of half-woman like me must have somebody to look after her underclothes and her hot bottles and packing all the things a man, no matter how epicene, can't do. Elvira's never been seasick in her life. She has a cast-iron stomach. She has a 300 h.p. electric brain. I can't carry on without Elvira. You'll have to tell our friends that all's off until Elvira's free of her mother."

Now, here's the whole point and end of the matter, as far as this section of my narrative is concerned.

I don't deny my vast personal disappointment. I had been looking forward to this cruise to the West Indies, not only in an elderly way (as I had sedately conveyed to my family) but in a really childish way. I had been looking forward to all kind of delights in which a sexagenarian may innocently revel. I had been consumed, for instance, with a burning lust for mangoes. Now the whole dream was shivered into dusty cataclysm.

I went straight to Toby. Perhaps I should have gone to Binkie, head of the Jorico family and originator of the expedition. But Toby's my friend, not Binkie. I was received by Toby in what he called his filthy boudoir in Hanover Street and put before him Lady Jane Crowe's desperate ultimatum.

The rest is simple. Toby had an inspiration. He left "Palmyre" to look after itself, and drove with me straight back to Jane. I have done my best to tell you how Jane loved Toby, and how in the hands of him, alone of mortals, she seemed to be wax.

The next day Lady Jane Crowe engaged Ruth Tellifer as lady's maid, after a quarter of an hour's interview.

And that is how Ruth Tellifer came to sail with the rest of us on the Cruise of the *Nautilus*.

CHAPTER VII

LIFE on board a perfectly run steam yacht in fine weather is not greatly different from life in a well-ordered country house. I had my own bedroom and private bathroom. Jane's chef served exquisite meals, and her cellar was stocked with the best. Down the Channel, until we got into the open sea on the way to the Azores, we had a day or two of rough weather which kept most of us, myself at any rate, in judicious seclusion. Then somebody threw oil on the troubled Atlantic. Halcyons sat about on wavelets, and never a storm or a shower of rain marred the grace of the rest of the voyage.

So much for the phenomena of inanimate nature. You must merely think of the lot of us steaming along over blue seas in golden sunlight. I think it best to get that sort of thing over at once. Except that the temperature grew perceptibly warmer as we drew south, one day was very much like the other.

Now I'm not a sailor. My acquaintance with ships had been limited to professional voyages on the P. & O. and Transports. That there could be enjoyment in such professional ocean travel had never occurred to me. I never took the trouble to learn how the hated thing went, how it was navigated, any more than I concerned myself with the mechanics of a train or the organization of a big hotel. I knew nothing of nautical terms. On a ship there is any quantity of ropes. But not one of them is called a rope. They

are stays, painters, halyards, sheets, God knows what. A floor isn't a floor—it's a deck. Perfectly good walls of rooms are called bulkheads. There's no right nor left; only starboard and port. There's another mystic side in a ship called the weather beam. A flight of stairs is a companion-way. There are a thousand other nautical terms invented merely to confuse the landsman. In any case, the invention has succeeded beyond the inventor's hopes. So, if in the course of this narrative I have to describe the ordinary environments of life aboard ship, I must crave your indulgence for lapses from technical accuracy.

Just as Dr. Johnson confessed towards the end of his life that he had never had the opportunity of eating enough wall-fruit, so must I confess that never before had I gone on any kind of pleasure cruise.

I enjoyed myself prodigiously. After the first day or two's upheaval, everybody went about on their best behaviour. We lounged on deck, read novels, talked, ate, played bridge, drank whiskies and soda, and slept. Sun and dark blue sea by day, and moon and indigo sky by night . . .

Binkie, Commander Sir Gregory Binkley, Bart., on board ship, belied our prognostications by his perfect demeanour. Except for the fact that he wore his yachting-cap at the Beatty angle, and looked portentously at passing vessels through a telescope and used precise nautical terms in his speech, and in chatting with the captain displayed an amazing subtlety of deference to his command mingled with the unquestioned authority of his naval rank, he might have been an ordinary landsman passenger like the rest of us.

Jane and I were talking of him one day and she said:

"I think it has escaped our notice that Binkie is an elaborate gentleman."

Jane has the genius of the exact word. I never thought of the word "elaborate" as a partial definition of Binkie. But it was exact. Binkie had built himself up with much thought and toil. He hadn't the qualities that impel a man to do the inspired right; but on the other hand, he could never do the absurdly wrong. Toby, as I have told you, summed up Binkie's impeccable yet not glorious naval career in a phrase. Binkie hadn't the Nelson touch.

Of course he was full of Trinidad and the Cave des Diablotins and the Jorico treasure. Night after night, in the comfortable sitting-room on the main deck, he would pull out his documents and his maps—from Heaven knows where he had procured a rough plan of the Cave—and demonstrate with unanswerable argument the position where the treasure must be hidden. Since the night of his family-treasure dinner-party he had worked out a cipher he had discovered in one of Ancestor Jorico's books—"Robertson's Elements of Navigation"—which I have told you belonged to one William Bence. It was a message contained in a series of faded yellow ink dots below words which appeared on practically continuous pages; but where an essential word could not be found, there was cryptogrammic reference to an indicated page.

I think the only genius Binkie showed in the war was his expert deciphering at the Admiralty. He could read a cipher as readily as a musician can read a musical score. In peace time the Admiralty had no use for an expert cryptogrammist. There were lots of little tragedies in Binkie's life.

"What about treasure-trove and the Government's whack?" asked Toby one evening.

"Treasure-trove be hanged!" cried Binkie. "It's our hereditary property. Don't you worry. Once on land I'm leader of the expedition. I must ask you all to recognize it loyally. I've made my plans and rely on you to help me carry them out."

"The old buccaneering spirit," said Lady Jane.

"It is exciting, isn't it?" said Hettie Dalrymple.

Everyone agreed. We were agreeing on the point all through the eventless voyage. The only complaint I heard —one never to reach the ears of the owner—was that the yacht didn't move fast enough. Young Nicholas sniffed at steam, although oil fuel engendered it, as hopelessly out of date and wondered why modern science couldn't fit yachts with internal combustion engines of infinite horse-power which would enable them to do a hundred or two hundred or a thousand knots instead of the fifteen at which *Nautilus* decorously and tediously travelled. The young man, however, found time hang not over heavy on his hands. He had signed on as wireless expert and sat most of the day in the wireless room, whence he sent messages from myself to my family, from Jane to stockbrokers, from his sister to her friends, and now and then, when hard put for a job, from Ruth Tellifer to her mother. Toby didn't want to communicate with anybody. A curiously isolated human unit was Toby.

"Oh, the peace of it!" said he. "To get away from all those damned women."

I think he sent one message to his father: "Mid-Atlantic. All well. Toby."

Apparently he had no friends. The old ones were either dead or married, or had sheered off when he was proclaimed as "Palmyre." The defection of the last category was perhaps Toby's own fault. He thought that the lusty and the hefty of his generation, the only ones with whom he was in sympathy, despised the man dressmaker. Toby was sensitive and a bit morbid on the subject.

"At the back of their minds," said he once, "I can see their thoughts. 'It's an epicene sort of trade. What's Toby doing in it, anyhow?' I quite agree with them. I feel it myself. It isn't a man's job."

I remonstrated paternally and, I thought, convincingly. But Toby stuck to his point. He damned "Palmyre" and all that therein was. He damned his eyes in the most literal sense: those eyes that could combine accurate shades of colour, and could see in a fraction of a second any deviation from perfection in line.

"It's a God-given gift," said I.

"That's my grievance," he cried. "Why did the Almighty give it to me, of all people? My ideal existence would be to go about in auroch skins and fool about with a stone axe. If I wanted a woman I'd like to hit her over the head and carry her off to my cave. That's the sort of man I am."

This confession was made to Jane Crowe and myself as we lounged in blue weather, outside the deck-house.

"It's a pity I'm so old," said Jane. "Years ago I'd have loved to be hit over the head and carried into a cave. You wouldn't hit her so hard that she missed everything, would you?"

"I think," said I, "that Toby would have come down through history as the Bayard of cave-men."

At that moment Ruth Tellifer, demurely attired in a dark blue nondescript dress, appeared.

"The message is coming through, my lady. You told me to tell you . . ."

Lady Jane skipped up to the bridge and the wireless-cabin. She was a woman of surprisingly sudden movements. Ruth, tall, calm, goddess-like, who had not yet grown accustomed to her mistress's electric vivacity, stood stock-still. I said—I think it was the first time I had found occasion to speak to her:

"I hope you're enjoying the voyage?"

She turned her deep eyes on me.

"I am, indeed, Sir Thomas."

"Isn't this sun and sky and sea wonderful?" said Toby. "Enchantment that you can't get even in Kent."

The girl looked instinctively round and seemed to take a full breath of the soft salt air.

"Yes, sir," she replied with a faint smile and the touch of a sigh.

She moved away. I saw Toby's eyes follow her.

"A fine upstanding young woman," said I. As indeed she was, clean-cut in the swinging grace of heroic form against the clear and shadowless light. Toby pulled out his pipe and tobacco pouch and mumbled:

"Yes. And quite a decent girl, too. Educated. Speaks well. Lady Jane thinks she's a treasure. Awful risk for a man to recommend one female to another. Anyhow, this seems to be a success."

He lit his pipe and sinking back on his deck-chair gazed ahead into the vast main of blue.

"You've a happy touch, my dear Toby," said I, "in pick-

ing out your subordinates. I noticed that when you were on my staff. Jones, for instance, was an inspiration."

He laughed. "Jones? Only a damned fool could have missed Jones. I hope he's doing you all right, sir?"

Toby had the genius of address. He never put in the "sir" except at the right moment. Jones was Major Boyle's orderly, put at the disposal of a Lieutenant-General.

"Jones," said I, "descends on me like an angel from the most punctual of heavens. He's a marvel."

He was. I have never been more scrupulously valeted in my life. Some sort of steward looked after Binkie and Nicholas, I suppose. I gave no thought to them. Why should I? But Toby had arranged that Jones should be at my especial service. I grew to love Jones. Whenever he came into my cabin he gave me the military salute. Did he give it to Toby? I asked. No. With Toby he was just the finished manservant. With me, a Lieutenant-General—how he got my rank into his head, God knows—it was different. I was a little tin god. When I went on board I gave him my keys, including the one that opened my case of decorations. I went into my cabin and found him looking at them. At once he sprang to attention and saluted. . . . Then I recognized in Jones the instinctive soldier. To this day I don't know the military rank with which I was associated in Jones's mind. But, at any rate, in that mind I was a tremendous fellow.

I have never had such perfect service, I an old soldier, inured to personal servants—orderlies, or, in the terms of the war, batmen, for more years than I care to count—as that which was rendered me by Toby's man Jones, cut off from the world of communicating ideas by deafness and

aphasia and what-not other disabilities. Although I had no idea of his aerographic medium of conversation with Toby, he would either anticipate my wants or interpret the evident gesture by which I tried to signify them.

A curious thing about him struck me. He had the peculiar, sure cat-footedness of those who follow the sea. We knew from Mrs. Tellifer that his father had done so —presumably in the R.M.S.P. Company's service. But Jones himself? It had never occurred to Toby to question him on the subject. On my suggestion he did so, and found that Jones was delighted to be at sea, his natural element, again. He discovered several other interesting things. Jones's earliest memories apparently were those of extreme poverty in a seaport town. He had passed most of his young life on a wretched little tramp steamer plying along the west coast of England. His father was in the same line of undistinguished business. When Sophie Tellifer (her maiden name) ran away with him from her undertaker husband, he may or may not have been in the Royal Mail Service. At any rate, it could easily be conjectured that to that Service he was no ornament. Jones remembered him only as a drunken ne'er-do-weel. Of course, it was not possible even for Toby to get accurate information from Jones. He could only interpret and record the man's impressions. The sea itself he loved. The dog's life he led he hated. This life, it seems, during his boyhood years, had been passed between Avonmouth, as far as Toby could guess, and Liverpool, in crazy little tubs of tramps carrying miscellaneous cargoes and stopping at the Welsh ports. His parents must have died when he was quite young—his father of drink and his mother of sheer misery.

Chance—remember this is vague history—took him to the port of London, where he signed on as steward on some kind of boat. After a year or two, by some transition from sea to land which he was unable to explain, he found himself a waiter in a dingy London hotel or cheap boarding-house. The war came and he joined up. He must have been batman to some young officer who, discovering his natural and steward-and-waiter-acquired aptitude, trained him quietly as a valet.

That, as far as Toby could make out, was the life story of Jones. It explained, to a certain extent, why—unless his was an extreme case of agraphia—he had apparently never learned to read or write. Toby was quite satisfied with the result of his investigations. But to me, only impersonally interested in the treasure-hunt in which the minds of my four young friends were absorbed, Jones stood out as a fascinating mystery. White-jacketed, slim, eager-faced, there was nothing about him to suggest the child born and bred in a provincial seaport slum, living bare-foot, in rags, God knows how, until he could earn a few shillings a week as a boy, to be kicked about by day and to sleep with cockroaches in a corner by night on a frowsy little steamer carrying anything from manure to pigs, up and down the Irish Channel. He was, for his station in life, a fellow of personal dignity, of regulation manners; a fellow of character—it's a vague term, but you know what I mean. And, on his mother's side, he was the acknowledged first cousin of this aloof and Junoesque young lady's maid with the Norman name.

When and why did his disillusioned and wretched drab of a mother tell him about it? What lambent pride in an-

cestry had impelled her? For that pride had been his all through his wretched and inglorious life. She had told him what the name meant—a family tradition curiously maintained—the appellation of the far distant ancestor who clove steel helmets with his sword; thereby stirring his imagination so that the fact remained as an imperishable memory. The address of his relations he had remembered accurately.

It amused and interested me to speculate on the possibility of the inherited aristocratic or heroic in the blood cropping out here and there sporadically in individuals. I had seen women like Ruth in Norway and the Channel Islands. My fantastic theory, however, fell down on the physical envisagement of Jones. He might have represented the composite portrait of any hundred efficient stewards on the P. & O. On the other hand, he bore no trace of his gutter breeding . . . so perhaps blood might have told after all.

The weather day by day grew hotter. The men wore ducks and the women their flimsiest garments. Flying fishes skimmed in and out of the deep blue waters. Coral and golden scraps of seaweed floated by. Beds for those who found cabins too hot were rigged up in the open air. An awning covered the deck. A variety of iced drinks stood continuously on a table, the contemplation of which, although we were a fairly abstemious lot, gave us the sensation of luxurious coolness. As pleasant a time as any was the hungry hour before lunch, and as pleasant a sight as any, the silver tray of cocktails in ice-frosted glasses handed round by the white-clad steward. After lunch one

was torpid and slept. At six it was dark, the blood-red sun going down perpendicularly, as though taking a swift dive behind the horizon. But before lunch there was nothing but the placid joy in the beauty of existence and in the anticipation of delicate food. The six of us always lounged together in great content.

"I don't want to be put ashore," said Hettie Dalrymple one day. "I don't want to look for treasure. I don't care if we never find it. I want to go on doing this for ever and ever."

"Better find your treasure first," said Jane Crowe, "and then buy a perfectly new storm-proof Atlantic."

"I don't think there could be a storm. The sea looks too kind."

"Many a man has thought like that when he has seen a woman asleep," remarked Binkie.

"You'll have the two of us asleep and carry on with the thought," snapped Lady Jane, "if you talk such antiquated rubbish. Why should women be compared with the sea, or with anything else? These generalizations as to the sexes bore me stiff."

"I don't know," I laughed. "Some are true. 'Souvent femme varie,' but 'Men are deceivers ever.' "

She laughed. "Now someone's talking sense." She turned to Nicholas, stretched out on a deck-chair near by. "Cheer up, young man, what's your view of things?"

He started and flushed.

"I'd like to agree with Hettie, but I can't." He waved a vague hand to the vast expanse beneath the awning. "I can't get my values right."

"Values, if that's what you call 'em, only come right

when you don't mess about with them. I believe in doing what you've got to do in the world and doing it with all your might."

"Carlyle," said Toby lazily.

"These young people don't believe in him any longer," said I.

"What do they believe in?"

The boy was about to reply, but Binkie interrupted him.

"They believe," he began pontifically, "in the possibility of creating a new world."

"Safe from democracy, I hope," said Lady Jane.

He laughed. The steward came with the cocktails, and presently the chief officer with information.

"There's a big Dutch liner, my lady." He smiled and pointed. "Homeward bound from Curaçoa."

We all rose and rushed to the starboard side, as though we had never seen a passenger steamer in our lives. Binkie adjusted his telescope, held it for Hettie and guided her view with practical advice. As a matter of abstract politeness, perhaps, he might have offered it to his hostess. But, as likely as not, she might have declared her lack of use for the damn thing, whereas Hettie's interest was absorbed and flattering. He made no bones about proclaiming his cousin a very intelligent woman. He confided to her, as one gradually became aware, odds and ends of precious details concerning the Jorico treasure which he withheld from the vulgar herd.

The liner passed by so close that we could see the vague blur of faces on the piled-up decks. She ran up a series of little flags in salute of our R.Y.S. ensign, and I've no doubt we ran up flags too, but the awning prevented us from

seeing them. Jane turned away from the side with me, and jerked a backward thumb at the telescope-absorbed pair. She was one of the few women I know who can jerk a backward thumb with an air of distinction.

"Hope she's not going to make a fool of herself."

"She's none too well off," I began.

"She will be when they've found the fortune."

"Yes, when. But the fortune has yet to be found. I can't say I believe in it as devoutly as I ought to——" and I didn't. "Meanwhile she's hard put to it and Binkie at heart is a very good fellow."

"She's worth ten of him," said Jane.

We had crossed to port side, out of earshot. "He's the sort of man that incorporates in a woman's marriage lines the King's Regulations and the Ten Commandments, underlining the First One."

"That's the Great Precept a sensible man hammers into a wife's head," said I.

"Did you hammer it into Marion's?"

I laughed ruefully. "Sometimes it's the other way on. I rather think she hammered first."

Hettie came across to us, all smiles and sea-shell fairness.

"It was a great sight. I could really pick out the faces and the dresses."

"Binkie was a telescope expert in the Navy," said Jane Crowe.

"He's a dear, all the same," said Hettie.

We went down to lunch.

Since I am talking of this voyage there is another seemingly trivial incident which it may be worth while to

record. It occurred a few nights after Binkie had taught Hettie how to look at a Dutch ship through a telescope.

We were playing bridge in the deck-house, Lady Jane, Binkie, Hettie and I. Nicholas lounged in a chair, his hands behind his back, dreaming of wireless discoveries or inventions with a hundred thousand pounds at the back of them. Toby, after a spell of standing and looking at our hands in his loose, bored way, filled a pipe and strolled out on deck.

The course of his wandering eventually took him down to the clear space on the deck below, forwards of the block of saloon and cabins. Two forms stood together looking over the side. As he approached, one moved. In the bright starlight he recognized the quarter-master. The other figure was that of Ruth. The man touched his cap and was sheering off. Toby cried cheerily:

"Don't worry. Carry on."

But the man, murmuring something about duties to attend to, went away. Ruth was about to turn, but Toby, bidding her remain, took the quarter-master's place.

"I've had very little chance of talking to you," he said in his pleasant fashion, "but as I'm more or less responsible for you, I think I must. First, how are you getting on with Lady Jane?"

She looked at him calmly. "Her ladyship expects everybody to be efficient. If you are, she's kindness itself."

Toby smiled. "And you're efficient?"

"What's the good of being anything else—in one's own job?"

"If I hadn't felt that somewhere in the depths at the

back of my head," said Toby, "I shouldn't have suggested you to Lady Jane."

"Thank you, sir," said Ruth.

There was a short silence, which Toby broke.

"Look here—apart from mistress and maid and all that sort of thing, and just as between two human beings—you're glad you came, aren't you?"

"Of course I am. It's wonderful."

"You see, Jones—you know how attached I am to Jones—Jones comes into it—justifies my speaking to you."

"Why, of course, sir," said Ruth.

It was a tropical night of unforgettable beauty. The air was warm, and so still as to be scarcely stirred by the yacht's speed through the waveless black of the distant waters. But down below them they sped through a magic band of phosphorescence which lit their faces as they peered down. And above the stars blazed like diamonds in the moonless black velvet sky. It was a night of terrifying splendour.

They watched the phosphorescent wash for some time in silence. Then Toby turned and leaned against the taffrail. Unconsciously, perhaps, Ruth moved too. He waved a hand.

"I wonder how it appeals to you—what you think of it."

She said, forgetful of class convention:

"How can one think of anything like this? It's too big. Too tremendous. One can only feel."

It was only then that, from her voice and her manner, Toby felt that there might be curious unexplored spiritual depths in this physically serene and majestic young creature, who so scrupulously obeyed in manner the convention of her class.

"Yes, overwhelming," he agreed. "Supposing," said he, after a pause, "all the black spaces disappeared, and all these stars came together in one vast brightness, what would happen?"

"We'd all die, I suppose."

"Why?" he asked.

"I think we'd be seeing God," said Ruth in a low voice, her face upturned to the stars.

"Seeing God—what a thought! What a damn wonderful thought," Toby murmured, leaning back, his arm on the taffrail. This peasant-born and artificially trained girl had hit upon something that was near elemental Truth. What else could be the manifestation of God than the conglomerate and annihilating splendour of all the worlds? The Greeks had an evanescent conception of it in their anthropomorphic legend of Zeus and Semele. This he dug up unconsciously from school-day memories.

Except for the starlight and the startling brilliance of the wash, and a dull, unilluminating gleam here and there of the ship's lights, all was strange and companionable darkness. It was late. From deck to the dimly-seen narrowing bows nothing was visible. The crew were asleep. Aft, nothing but the bulk of saloon and cabins and the dimly-lit passage-way that opened to the fore-deck where they stood. As to sound, nothing but the throb of the engines; and the elusive whisper of cut waters.

Presently Toby pointed to the sky.

"There—see, hanging low—is the Southern Cross."

"Where?"

"There. Those four stars. It's only visible in the tropics."

"I know," said Ruth. "I ought to have recognized it."

"Your friend, the quarter-master," he laughed, "ought to have pointed it out to you."

"He didn't," said Ruth. "I don't think it occurred to him to talk of stars and things."

Toby laughed. He forgot that Ruth was his hostess's maid. Before the big immensities, futile little human values vanish. (This, I must assure you, is not one of my own profound observations on life. It's a literal quotation from Toby *passim*.)

"If I'm not too terribly indiscreet, what did he talk to you about?"

"His wife and children at Gosport," said Ruth.

"The unimaginative—whatever the nautical term is!" cried Toby.

The girl seemed to be in a reflective mood.

"I don't know," she answered soberly. "More things go by contraries than you think. To point out the Southern Cross wouldn't be imagination. It would be just fact. He really was imagining things when he talked to me of his wife and children."

Toby moved from the rail and stood upright.

"You're a queer girl," said he, with a laugh. "Thanks for letting me gossip with you. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir," said Ruth.

Toby swung across the deck to the opposite corridor, where his cabin was situated. At the entrance he came across Jones, who signed just perceptibly in the starlight that his things had been laid out for the night. He nodded and pulled out his pipe. It caught somehow in his pocket and fell. He stooped, groping, to pick it up, and saw Jones speed, catlike, to the side where Ruth was still standing.

CHAPTER VIII

We were all on deck, approaching our Trinidad. The entrance to the bay is through channels between a group of green islands, called the Bocas, and the northern promontory. The one we chose was the Dragon's Mouth, a narrow channel of swirling smooth current. On the one side were the green islands with surf beating up on white beaches, wooded with strange trees of riotous foliage, tamarinds, coco-nut palms, through which peeped, here and there, the roof of a dwelling. On the other, the triumphant majesty of the great island, its far-flung slopes melting into the blue mountains beyond. It seemed a land of lavish vegetation beyond the European's power of imagining. Now and then smiling cultivated patches of trees—cocoa estates with smiling one-floor habitations attached. Then suddenly burst on our view a hillside of vivid scarlet and golden trees.

We entered the bay, or more accurately, the Gulf of Paria. It was early morning. The sea had magically changed colour. No longer the accustomed ultra-marine, lace-worked with foam, of the Atlantic, but a fantastic grey sea, streaked in cool distances with pale green, yellow and vermilion.

We were all huddled up, on the top deck, forwards, and I have the impression that no one spoke. Even Binkie was silent. If he had buzzed about me, I think I should have bitten him. My foreign life had been passed in the arid

East. This teeming West of gigantic growth was new to me, as it was to the others, except Jane Crowe. And if I stood entranced, those four others were doubly enchanted, bound in the second spell of the El Dorado they would find in the innermost heart of this already generous land.

It was only when we came upon the capital, Port of Spain—sad misnomer, for it never has been, and in all probability never will be, a port at all—and dropped anchor suddenly in the vagueness of the gulf, that we broke up and began to chatter. Ships and craft of all kinds were at anchor round about us. Fleets of flat-bottomed boats with lateen sails, manned by shirt-and-shorts clad negroes, were loading and unloading vessels. Far away gleamed a white quay and hidden by palms and strange foliage stretched the fantastic glimpse of a town, in a broad and deep valley, with the many-hued strange mountains looming in a near distance.

We landed, the six of us, from the awning-equipped motor-launch, on the quay, a pandemonium of glistening negroes, white men and coloured clerks, note-books in hands, and all perspiring; of cargoes—crates, hogs-heads, sacks—God knows what—piles mountain high, and being dragged by the horde of bright black ants to or from the fringe of lighters, the flat-bottomed boats which alone can moor in the shallow water by the quay-side. A couple of touring-cars awaited us. If there's one thing Jane Crowe knows, it's her pleasant way about the world. Each was in charge of a white-uniformed coloured chauffeur with a curiously efficient London manner.

"Yes, my lady," touching his cap, "I was to tell you that

everything was quite in order. Luggage and the two servants? Yes, my lady, it's all arranged."

Jane and Hettie and I went in the first car. Hettie sighed.

"This isn't at all the proper first start on a treasure-hunt. It's too civilized. I hoped he'd have said: 'Yes, Massa Tom. Yes, Miss Jane. Me go hotel damn quick.' He might be taking us to Claridge's or the Embassy. Oh!"—suddenly—"what a lovely place!"

For we entered at once into a square of greenery—Marine Square—flanked by fair white buildings, banks and commercial houses and shops. Far away through the green we could see a fine church—the Roman Catholic Cathedral. There were trams and such-like beautiful abominations of ultra-civilization. As the car sped us northwards up Frederick Street, the main thoroughfare of the town, Hettie, who had not travelled farther than Lucerne in her life, confessed to me later that her impressions were nothing but a phantasmagoria of all shades of colour of human faces, of all kinds of costumes that could be worn by man and woman, of distorted values of greens, yellows, reds, in the dry and startlingly sun-cleared air. There were palms of all kinds—areca palms, coco-nut palms, great broad-leafed bananas, fretted-leaved tamarinds, cotton-trees. In by-streets negro children, stark naked, curiously bellied, played about in the white dust in front of the sun-warped wooden dwellings.

We reached the great open park known as the Savannah—so big that the race-course occupies in it a not considerable space, and fronting it, the comfortably lying Queen's Park Hotel.

Now, this had been a subject of controversy between Jane and myself. I had also been spokesman for Binkie and Toby.

"On the yacht, my dear Jane," I had said, "we are your guests. On land, we fend for ourselves. Hospitality has its limits."

"As soon as anybody oversteps them," said Jane, "he'll damn well know about it."

"But still . . ." I urged.

"I undertook to be responsible for you from Southampton and back. If it was a reasonable port where one could moor alongside a jetty, you'd all have stayed aboard without question. As it means half a day's trip to get to the yacht if one wants to powder one's nose, I personally prefer to live ashore. The five of you can do as you like. Live aboard and fend for yourselves for food and transport. Meanwhile I've secured rooms long ago at a perfectly comfortable hotel. Pay your share? My dear ass, Tom Forester, when I ask you to dinner, why don't you come to me afterwards and say: 'And how much do I owe you for this charming meal?' Oh, go to hell, the whole silly lot of you, and don't worry me. Worry's the only thing in this idiot world that I can't stand."

"My dear," said I, "I wouldn't worry you for a king's ransom."

I took her by her shoulders, and ceremoniously kissed her kind brow. What could an impecunious Lieutenant-General do more?

Our position as Jane's guests on shore had thus been determined.

We passed a few idle days. We wrote our names in the book at Government House, which lies embowered in trees diametrically opposite the hotel on the other side of the Savannah, were entertained in high quarters, were called upon by notables and taken on trips to Maraval and the Blue Basin and the show spots of loveliness round about Port of Spain. We were shown the cannon-ball tree that bears inedible fruit like cannon-balls and blooms like the passion flower, and the fluffy cotton-tree, and the guava and the papaw and the tall tree ferns. We were given, at Jane's request, for she had sojourned in the islands for a while years ago, the delectable native dishes: callaloo, which is an apotheosis of the American Okra soup; salt fish and stewed plantains, turtle served in the shell, land crabs, and souse, which is the gelatinous parts of a pig pickled in lime-juice, and hot and fragrant with fresh red and yellow peppers. We admired everything, even the mosquitoes and the red ants. In return for hospitality, Jane gave a luncheon party on board the *Nautilus* and some cocktail parties at the hotel. Everything was done in decency and order, as though we were the merest globe-trotters with unquestionable social credentials. Of our quest, not a soul in the island had a notion. Secrecy was the essence of our mission. The captain, officers and crew of the yacht were unsuspicious. Even Ruth, in her intimate relations with Jane as confidential maid, had no idea of it; and of course Jones, beyond reach of fantastic human communication, took the voyage for granted as a pleasure trip organized by a bountiful lady of enormous wealth.

"Don't you think the whole lot of you," said I, "with Jane and me as accessories, are rather dirty dogs? Here you

are, accepting the Island's bountiful hospitality, and all the time conspiring to rob it of half a million of money."

Toby grinned: "If what Binkie says is true, they'll never know. Besides, it's not theirs, but ours."

"What about treasure-trove and Government rights?"

"There's old man Jorico's will, and Binkie's *précis* of his documentary evidence . . . Do you know, sir, I wish he'd hurry up. This is getting on my nerves."

"How?"

"I've every comfort—but I can't sleep in the beastly place. I dream things. Sometimes I'm in Aladdin's cave, picking up diamonds and rubies, and last night I threw the whole lot of you overboard. It was beautifully easy. I just waved my hand and you all went like lambs into the sea. And I was awfully pleased and didn't regret it when I woke up. It's getting on the nerves of Hettie and Nicholas, too, although they wouldn't admit it. Binkie, of course, is having the time of his life."

This probably was true; for we saw little of Binkie save at meals. He spent much time in the Trinidad Public Library, a collection to be paralleled only with that of our great municipalities, which includes in a special department a complete printed history of the Colony from its earliest days. It preserves files and files of ancient newspapers.

He came upon me one afternoon as I was smoking on the veranda, and said:

"I've discovered something I wanted to know. Do you remember my exhibiting a book of Ancestor Jorico's—'Robertson's Elements of Navigation, 1796'? Well, I did. It belonged to one William Bence, because his name was in it! I told you that the map found in another book and

signed 'W. B.' was made by Bence and not by Jorico. I've been hunting through newspaper files and I've found a reference to him. He was in the same line of business as our ancestor."

This seemed to me somewhat academic investigation.

"What the devil does it matter?" I asked. "All you've got to do is to locate the treasure, which you've told me you've already done, and to organize the expedition to go and look for it."

"I've done that too. Of course," said Binkie in his brisk, withered way. "But I like to be thorough. I've done everything humanly possible to convince myself, and provide proofs to convince others, that this isn't a wild-goose chase. I go on certainties. Look at this newspaper extract I've discovered."

I read his pencilled copy.

"Anxiety is felt by the mate and the crew of the Barque *Polly* as to the safety of the Master, Captain Bence, who went with a party of negroes, carrying provisions, on an exploring journey into the interior a month ago. As none of the negroes have returned, it is only to be presumed that he was foully murdered and robbed by them of all his possessions."

"Interesting, isn't it?" said Binkie.

"Very," said I. "What's the date?"

He pointed to his pencilling—3.4.08. "Third of April, 1808."

"Nothing more?"

"No. I presume nothing more was heard of him, and the editor of the period lost interest. But it's uncanny finding this trace of him."

I assented, and seeing a cool-vested black waiter hovering around, ordered cocktails.

"These things are, as you suggest, somewhat academic," said Binkie. "But I've been working out practical things. You talk of organizing an expedition. Of course I've done it. We start the day after tomorrow—early in the morning. The Colonial Secretary's a very good fellow, and put me in the way of things. An extraordinary fact connected with this Cave des Diablotins is that certainly not a hundred white people have visited it in the last hundred years. An ornithologist—E. L. Joseph, who published a book in 1837 on 'Birds of Trinidad'; Charles Kingsley in 1869 or 1870; a living English novelist in 1878; and Theodore Roosevelt, who claimed to have discovered it in 1916. It doesn't seem to interest the inhabitants, and tourists are all agog to see the Pitch Lake. . . . We can get there and back easily in the day. I thought at first I'd better go prospecting on my own, and then come back and take you all back with me; but it didn't seem fair. I propose to leave the women behind. It's a tedious journey. Nicholas will look after his sister's interests. You'll come, of course, for the fun of the thing?"

"I'll join in any kind of old fun," said I, "so long as it's fairly near and not too fatiguing."

So that was that. On the Thursday morning at six o'clock we started in one of the cars subventioned by Jane. It was late dawn, exquisitely fresh, with the quiver of evaporating dew all over the green Savannah. The hills behind Government House shimmered in the glory of the scarlet and gold of the flowers of the bois immortel and the poui. The

air was clear sapphire, and impregnated with the perfumes lavished by a laughing and indiscriminate god.

The car sped through the early quiet of the town and took the north-east main road to Arima. Binkie, sitting on the back seat next to me, with Toby opposite and young Nicholas by the chauffeur, had a map-learned knowledge of the road, and very soon became like one of those beastly things one meets with in private houses which bellows out fatuous information. These can be stopped by the pressure of an electric switch. But without great discourtesy one couldn't switch off Binkie! Toby and I did our best not to listen to him. But as a wireless loud speaker does not concern itself with its audience, so did Binkie disregard our inattention.

As we went deeper into the country, following the railway line, I grew more and more interested in the wayside sights. We came into the region of the sugar-canes: vast plantations thickly grown, as thick as wheat, of canes and foliage ten feet high, furrowed at the foot by irrigation ditches. And, with the sugar, there sprang into life a sight dearly familiar to me—the Hindu coolie. There was India, low- or sans-caste, India just as I had known it, dusty, patient, unchangeable from custom, wiry, semi-industrious, capra-clad around the loins, the women showing six dark inches of woman between bodice and skirt; working in the cane plantations; squatting by the roadside; cooking most probably chupatties outside their huts, visible through here and there a vista, just as they did in India. . . .

"I understand Coolie Labour was stopped in 1917," announced loud-speaker Binkie. "But still Indian coolies supply practically all the labour in the sugar industry.

Since slavery time it hasn't been worth the negro's while to work on estates. Very interesting fact, I was told. One-third of the population of Trinidad is of Indian descent."

He boomed on. Figures and facts; facts and figures. Binkie's meat and drink. Jane has a story of Binkie having counted the thorns in the Crown on some famous picture of the Descent—Rubens?—I can't remember—and triumphantly challenging all comers to tell the number. He called that elementary observation.

Speeding through the dusty land, picturesque with bronzed Hindus and lazily negro-driven mule carts; with the vividness of wine-red and russet streaked canes and their green foliage; with the glad range of eastern hills awake and dancing and gleaming shadowless in all fantastic crudities of colour beneath the morning sun—I worried little with Binkie. Toby sat sideways and half turned his broad back on us.

We went through Arima, about twenty miles from Port of Spain, a railway junction for other parts of the island, and a primitive townlet, mainly negro. I had an impression of decent wooden, gaily painted houses; splendid teeth set in smiling and kindly black faces—those of men and women clad, as in Port of Spain, both in the good old negro fashion of fifty years ago, and in an imitation of that of the present day. There were no perceptible degrees of transition. Pot-bellied, naked children of both sexes tumbled about happily in the dust.

An important-looking mulatto policeman stopped the car. Why? There is no such thing in British Dominions as the French Octroi. He only wanted to shake hands with the chauffeur who, as I learned afterwards, was his wife's

cousin. He saluted us courteously when we drove on. Nicholas, leaning over the back of the front seat, told us that the conversation during the hold-up turned on the policeman's craving for information as to Augustus, the chauffeur's sister's child's progress through a present attack of mumps.

"Scandalous!" cried Binkie. "Damn the fellow. I'll report him."

"I shouldn't, my dear fellow," said I, "until you've really got the hang of this happy-go-lucky land!"

You see, I am an old Anglo-Indian. I know my tropics. The highest Common Factor of one human being sitting on the North Pole and another sitting on the Equator must be the lowest conceivable by a civilized intellect. They may argue with each other for a thousand years.

"To come down to brass tacks," says the man on the North Pole, who, for climatic reasons, has a more frozenly classified brain than the equatorial interlocutor, "I can't see that we have anything in common between us, except the two Elementary Principles of Life. I must eat. So must you. Some god- or devil-inspired instinct compels me to reproduce my species. So it does you. What else have we in common? I love blubber hot from the whale. Sitting with your feet dangling at the Bar of the Equator, you would vomit not only at the sight but at the suggestion of it. I've got to face sixteen hours a day of physical effort and endeavour in order to support my wife and family. You get off your stool, steadying yourself by the Equatorial Bar-rail, lounge into a banana patch, pluck off a dozen or so of bananas, fling them to your wife and children with a 'Here ye are, my dears; all I want is to make you happy,

and don't wake me up, for picking bananas is very fatiguing for a man who is getting into his forties.'"

So it seems to me that between Lat. 0 S. and Lat. 90 N. there must be an infinite differential scale of human values.

If you expect Aberdonian thoroughness south of Naples, you won't get it.

Some four miles beyond Arima we came upon a cavalcade awaiting us at a narrow road running south from the main road along which we had motored. We alighted. Binkie rubbed his hands.

"Now the Great Adventure begins. This is the Expedition."

The Expedition consisted of six mules and two pleasant-spoken negroes, our guides. The mules, efficient-looking animals, had, Binkie assured us, been carefully chosen for their gentleness of demeanour and sureness of foot. The guides were natives of the interior. The elder one had taken Theodore Roosevelt himself to the Cave. Binkie pointed to the guides' mules scientifically equipped with provisions and, as I gathered from his guarded speech, implements essential to the discovery of hidden treasure. He strode up and down the Expedition, brisk in suppressed excitement, with the air of the Commander of a Destroyer going into his first action.

We mounted, started off along the valley road and soon found ourselves in single file, one guide in front, the other behind, in a wonderland of tropical wildness. It became no longer a road, but a bridle-path through untouched and monstrous vegetation. For much of the way the path was but a rude pass along the side of wild gorges,

with, here and there visible through freakish vistas of foliage, blue pools of the mountain stream far beneath. The air was hot and stagnant. We came through patches of sunlight with the curious regularity of city gas-lamps when one is walking in a slight fog. Everything that could possibly grow, grew to monstrosity, to infinite profusion, in this hot-house of virgin forest. The narrow bridle-path itself had been cleared, but on each side the rank and giant wilderness of green was an inextricable tangle of lianes, the brown vegetable ropes winding from tree to tree, heart-breaking barrier to the human violator of the forest's sanctity. All monstrous and fetid in overgrowth. Ferns sprang up twenty feet high with foliage ugly in its fatness. And there was strident noise when one expected the silence of living death. Hidden cicadas rattled their wings screechingly. Little green parakeets, visible through the trees, made discord. Now and then a gaudy macaw flew with raucous sound from branch to branch. Here and there the gleaming silver of a waterfall rumbled eternally.

Humming-birds of myriad-toned iridescence flickered their tiny way among the tree-trunks. And at times one saw a great Argus butterfly of nightmare size flap its lapis-lazuli wings with the final languor of approaching death.

By the side of the track one could see slowly moving ribands of green, many yards long; parasol ants carrying over their heads tiny circles of green leaf as provisions to their home.

At one moment, the track being on fairly level ground away from the precipice, the leading guide's mule seemed

to stumble, and the man turned round excitedly and urged us to follow his example of hurry. Binkie, following him as Leader of the Expedition, reined up to see what was the matter. He saw and, waving to me, jogged his mule into a trot. And then I saw, too. The egg-shell trunk of a tree fallen across the track had been touched by the guide's mule. And myriads and myriads of great brown ants were pouring out of the hole.

We were wet through. Our jackets we had slung on the withers of our mounts. We learned later that it had been an airless day even on the coast. Here in the corruption of the tropical forest the heat surrounded us with the clamminess of a stinking poison.

You may say that, as an elderly gentleman, accustomed for the last few years to easy living, I am trying to impress on you pictures of fantastic horror of a simple mule-ride in perfectly civilized conditions in a bit of the British Empire which challenges Mayfair in its pride of super-civilization. Well, I am, in my artless way. I have my reasons.

When we emerged, after a two and a half hours' ride, into a vast patch of sunshine and air, with a little stream dancing and sparkling and rippling over brown stones, and threw ourselves down exhausted by the heat and the drenching exhalations of the tropical forest's rank vegetation—not only elderly I, but Toby, who made a gospel of keeping himself fit, and Nicholas, the boy—I began to think of the object of our journey. That object was a chest of piratical treasure brought within two or three hundred yards of us by Europeans over a hundred years ago.

If we, with all the resources of civilization at our command, had arrived, after a mere four hours from Port of Spain, dead beat by the tremendous venoms of the tropical forest, what must have been the courage and the endurance and almost insensate purpose of the early adventurers who had to hew their trackless way, inch by inch, with axe and cutlass, for thirty miles, to the spot where we now lay panting?

I haven't the remotest desire to make your flesh creep for us, comfortable tourists, with everything organized, prearranged, and foreseen by Binkie, except the ant universe which had eaten the tree-trunk to an egg-shell. I can only tell you what I saw and felt. But I only do so to give your imagination a chance.

Just think of Old Man Jorico and his merry men. They couldn't, with all their hacking, have gone more than the three miles a day; hacking, hacking a path, carrying provisions, sleeping in the close poison of the forest, tracking the river as well as they could, beset by the infinite danger of snakes, coral snakes, the deadliest kind, pythons and poisonous whip-snakes; wild-cats, fierce as leopards; scorpions, centipedes, mosquitoes, ants, ants, ants, white ants, red ants, brown ants, black ants, some as large as house-flies. How could they cope with it all? The dew that soaked a man to his under-skin? The malaria that made a man's bones shiver under his flesh?

Lying in the fresh sweet air in the shade of a mango tree, and watching Binkie make a beast of himself with the squirting yellow pulp of the fruit, I figuratively raised my hand in salutation to his Ancestor Jorico.

CHAPTER IX

We came upon the cave, after another stage, a hole in a hill whence rippled out a clear little bubbling stream, between banks fringed with grass and bamboo. This was the Aripo river whose course we had followed in our long precipitous journey up the valley. Quite near by was a small cocoa-plantation, owned, as I learned later, by one of the old Island families, but apparently run by a tiny community of smiling negroes, who, men, turbaned women and dusty children, greeted the rare expedition. A few rough wooden huts on various levels of the rising ground—a space for the great drying-trays, where already the pulp-covered beans steamed in the sun, and beyond, the plantation in orderly rows of trees with the great purple and yellow pods drooping from the branches, and small red-berried coffee shrubs planted between: that was the cocoa estate. Of course there were palms, coco-nut and areca. And there were mango trees, and a clump of cassava and maize. There were also vagrant skinny chickens and a goat or so. The four-foot-wide tiny stream was bridged here and there by planks.

In answer to questions the estate folk talked English and manifested much the same civilized courtesy as the inhabitants of any remote rural district of England or France. Among themselves they spoke the old Creole French—a strange tongue not without rude charm. "I have" is "moens ca tini"—the Spanish "tengo"; and "to

give" is "bailler," which is ancient French beyond the time of Rabelais.

The eleven-o'clock tropical sun beat down on us mercilessly. The mules drooped their heads, sweating like ourselves. Short in point of hours though our journey was, it is not one to be recommended to the casual tourist. As a matter of fact, few people in Trinidad know otherwise than vaguely of the cave's existence, and those that do refuse conscientiously to recommend it as the object of a pleasant jaunt.

Binkie, solar-topee'd, silk-shirted, riding-breeched, the only one of us—dry, precise little beggar—who wasn't drenched with perspiration, asked contentedly:

"Shall we lunch now? Mr. Henrico"—he indicated the polite black manager—"has put his shady veranda at our disposal. Or shall we have a preliminary investigation of the cave?"

"Oh, for God's sake, let us start in at the cave at once," said young Nicholas, his nerves on edge and, therefore, forgetful of manners.

"I'm consulting Sir Thomas," said Binkie witheringly.

"It's early yet," said I. "We may as well have a look round first."

"Thank you, sir," said Toby, mopping his face. "Far the best to see what we're up against."

Well, you see, they were up against the elusive possibilities of a great fortune. The elaborately traced out hiding-place described by Binkie was before their eyes. Their imaginations had been wrought up, as it were, to pirate pitch. In there, beyond that mouth in the green hill, in a visible fuliginous darkness, a startling area of black in the vivid

riot of sun and colour, lay wealth whose possession would change the tenor of their discontented lives.

"Let us go," said Binkie. He turned to the chief guide. "The torches, please."

A pitch-black cave is a pitch-black cave all the world over. Unless one is an explorer or a professionally interested scientist, the laborious groping about a cave is the most boring experience of the globe-trotting man. I have seen many caves in the course of my military service; mostly either as official cicerone, or as a friendly and self-sacrificing ass. But I had never visited a cave to look for hidden private treasure. I can't deny that, although dog-weary, I felt the thrill of it.

It was as vast a cavern as I have seen. Its blackness forbade my seeing much of it. Our electric torches only gave the impression of dark dim distances. Round about us birds disturbed flew and scuttered discordantly. Away in the velvet circuit were thousands of pairs of yellow, non-luminous lights—the eyes of mated pairs of devil-birds too far away on the stalactite-hung ridges to be disturbed by our petty torch-lit groping along the side of the icy cold trickling stream that has its source down in the far-away secret founts of the cavern.

The birds, guacharos, diablotins of the goat-sucker species, are found in few other spots in the world. They are nocturnal in habit, and feed on the shoots of the palms that grow outside. From the screeching shapes that fled out of the radius of our torches, I gathered that they were about the size of a partridge.

The air was cold. It is the only chilly place in the whole of the West Indies. If the tutelary deity of my existence,

my wife, had been with me, she, of her prescience, would have insisted on wrapping me up in my coat before I entered this realm of sunlessness, earth-cold water, and dank exhalations. We groped with our torches, headed by our guide, I, at any rate, not knowing whither we were groping. There was the sour stench and the incrustation around the visible rocks of a thousand centuries of bird-droppings.

I had dawdled, in an elderly way, somewhat behind the string of younger men, interested in the murky mystery of the place and the uncanny pin-specks of yellow light in the blackness, when I heard Binkie say:

"Is the source of the river much further up?"

The guide answered in effect: "The spring itself is fifty yards away. But it is difficult to reach. There are rocks which must be climbed. No one, I think, has ever passed beyond the spring. The cave is said to wind narrowly and unaccountably inland for more than a mile. There is also the source of another river, the Oropouche, which runs north; this river, the Aripo, as you see, is the one that runs south."

"I think that's all we want to see at present, thanks," said Binkie. "Will you kindly get ahead and show us the way out?"

The guide obeyed. As soon as he appeared to be beyond the earshot of whispers, Binkie collected the three of us conspirator-wise around him.

"This is more or less the spot. Ninety-five yards from the mouth. I've paced it. But when I come again I'll bring a measuring-tape. There's no more need for a guide now than from the Ritz to Piccadilly Circus." He drew out a pocket compass and consulted it under his torch. We

pressed up to him in the weird and stagnant darkness. "N.N.E., ten yards." he flashed his torch. "That's where it is. Buried somewhere in those rocks."

"Let us go and see," cried young Nicholas, starting forward. But Binkie grabbed his arm.

"Do you suppose, if it could be seen, that it wouldn't have been seen by somebody during the last hundred years? You must learn patience. The only thing to do now is to go back and have lunch."

Feeling chilled and tired, I agreed with him. Toby followed the beam of the torch.

"What they did was to hide the chest in a natural cleft and cover it up with a hunk of rock."

"And by this time it has been cemented in by the birds. That's what we're up against. It isn't as simple as it seems, Nicholas."

"Still, we're by no means downhearted," laughed Toby.

We retraced our steps, and perhaps for the first time in my life I welcomed the fierce blaze of the midday tropical sun.

We ate at a pitch-pine table in front of the manager's wooden house. Binkie had organized our petty expedition with the forethought of one about to explore the darkest heart of Central Africa. He displayed a little chemically operated ice-machine which he had brought from England, with his usual conjurer's air. He was very far from being downhearted. Up to a thrilling moment he had been successful in his search. Within a few square feet he had located the treasure. Further accurate measurement would take him to the exact spot. Ancestor Jorico was no fool, he declared. When the old buccaneer said "yards," he

meant measured yards, not paces. His compass directions must be accurate. . . .

"Your apparent conception, my dear young friend," said he, looking around to see that he couldn't be overheard—the guides and the estate people had melted away into the sunshine, so that the white guests could be alone in the shade—"that we could go at once with pickaxes and spades, and perhaps dynamite, and hoick out a chest of treasure is absurd. The news of it would get about immediately. There would be a hell of a hullaballoo all over the place. Why didn't I start with a surveyor's measuring tape, you may ask? The guide would have spotted something queer. The essence of the whole thing is secrecy. Not a living soul in the island must suspect. You see that, don't you? Now there are three things before us. One: to find the exact spot—that's child's play. Two: to unearth the chest containing the treasure. It is in a chest. There's no doubt about it. You've seen old Jorico's drawing with little devils dancing on the lid. Three: to transport the contents of the chest, without arousing any suspicion, from here to the *Nautilus*."

"How are you going to do that?" asked Nicholas.

I didn't like the sight of his thin-drawn young face.

"That for the moment, if you'll allow me, is my secret," said Binkie, in his dry urbane way. He turned to Toby. "You must 'trust me all in all or not at all,' " he quoted.

"Of course we do," said Toby. "It's your show."

"It seems to be the show of us four cousins," said the boy.

"Quite so, my son," Binkie agreed good-humouredly. "And I'm stage-managing it for us all. Have a drink."

Now and then Binkie showed the flashes of a very good fellow.

After lunch we lounged comfortably in our chairs. The air was heavy with the smell of the baked earth of the yard below where the black children and fowls kicked up the dust, and with the faint miasmic odour of the cave. The manager came up, politely asked after our further wants, and hailed a black girl of fourteen to take away and wash the plates and things we had brought from the hotel. Why should she trouble, we asked? He was not going to let the Queen's Park Hotel, he replied, think that country people had no manners. The child cleared the table efficiently. Binkie rose and took the manager aside. They disappeared into the house. We sweltered and smoked.

Presently Binkie returned, a smile on his prim face. He sat down and lit a cigarette.

"Well, that's done," said he.

"What?" Toby asked.

Binkie always loved encouragement in his mysterious little ways.

"Ah! I thought you'd ask. Our good friend, Henrico, can put me up, perhaps another, for a few days. Just a room and a bed—with staple provisions—for a modest sum. It's his son's room. Son apparently attending a course at the Imperial college of Tropical Agriculture, learning all about the chemistry of cocoa-growing. That's modern progress, isn't it?"

"What's this modern young man's scheme of bedroom decoration?" asked Toby.

"Don't know what you mean," said Binkie, seldom aware of the ironical. "Perfectly good large bare room with

a camp bedstead and a tin water bowl. What more does the fellow want! And if it comes to that, what do I want? Tom's lain harder and so have you and so have I. . . ."

"If you let me come, Cousin Gregory, I'll willingly sleep on the floor—anywhere," said Nicholas.

Binkie looked at him severely. "If you come you'll have to obey orders."

"That'll be all right," said Nicholas.

"I hope so. Meanwhile you're interrupting. Do you know why I've chartered quarters here? Why, yes. So that I can carry out the search undisturbed. But the reason I've given? No. Listen. This cave is the most wonderful cave in the world. There are no other hanging rocks and stalactites like it, no other birds like it . . . Of course, there's the cave at Huevos, but that doesn't matter. . . . I'm sent out by the Government in London to make a scientific report. I showed the headings of one or two official Admiralty letters. I'm a very great scientist. An ornithologist lined with a geologist."

"My dear fellow," Toby interrupted, "we all know you're an onion in spheres of learning. Take off one skin and we come to another. But why tell us?"

"I'm not wasting my time telling you," replied Binkie. "I'm explaining what I've told Mr. Henrico. Don't you see? I must have free access to the cave at any hour of the day or night, so as to observe the habits of the birds, and I've Government authority to forbid the natives worrying me. I and whoever is with me shall be all alone. Don't you see the point? And lastly . . ." He bent over the deal table and motioned us to lean forwards our heads, so that we formed as conspiratorial a picture as you can imagine

. . . "I've drummed into Mr. Henrico's by no means unintelligent brain that I'm going to take back a few sackfuls of stalactites and dead diablotins to the British Museum. There," he cried, throwing himself back in his chair, with an air of triumph, "if you can devise a better plan of carrying away the treasure without exciting suspicion, I'm open to a suggestion."

Toby clapped him on the shoulder. "Again I say it's your show. And a damn good show. Worked out to the last eye-hole of a sack. We follow you blind."

"Thank you, Toby. It's like you. You see a thing like this can only be run by one man—the man who holds all the strings. But at every opportune moment I take you loyally into my confidence."

"Of course you do," said Toby.

"And what do we do now?" asked Nicholas.

"Go back to Port of Spain."

"But surely . . . ?"

"We might stay on here? Or you stay on? Have you a toothbrush with you? No. Well, I've always objected to men under my command going to bed without brushing their teeth."

The boy flushed and turned away, twitching impatient shoulders. I must say that Binkie tempered the severity of his reproof with a kindly smile. When he rose, Toby took Nicholas aside.

"If you let things get on your nerves like this, I'll have you shanghai'd on the *Nautilus,* and get Lady Jane to maroon you on Turk's Island, some hundred miles away."

We bade farewell to Mr. Henrico, who, with all the

smiling and teeth-flashing plantation, accompanied us to our mules. Then we mounted and started on our return journey.

Back we must go over the mountainous, precipitous roads, through the gigantic growth of forest trees, through the dank and stagnant undergrowth, from which more than half a day's burning sun had extracted every leprous exhalation. Beauty of amazing colour and infinite wonder of shadow, with here and there a waterfall, turned by the westering sun into a swiftfully visualized cascade of diamonds, dazed our aching eyes.

A mule, even the kindliest, is not a comfortable beast to ride on a long journey. In his efforts to please you he has a way of expanding and contracting himself like a band of india-rubber beneath your saddle. If he had been a horse, I could have slept. I've done so a hundred times. But the man who could sleep on mule-back must have been one of the Seven Great Ones.

At the Queen's Park Hotel the remains of an elderly Lieutenant-General were temporarily reanimated with cocktails and solid nourishment of sorts, and put into a cool bed from which they refused to arise for a couple of days.

CHAPTER X

THE Savannah, as far as I have been able to indicate, is a vast expanse of enclosed grass-land, in which the race-course, with stand complete, takes up a curiously small area. Also, comparatively small is the cricket ground. The rest is an attractive waste slightly irregular in level. There are dry dells in which, after an hour's tropical deluge of rain, little boys can swim. There are innumerable palms and coco-nut trees. Far away to the right is a startling clump of cabbage palms known as the Seven Sisters. Zebu cattle graze peacefully. Hidden in foliage, at the foot of the blue northern mountains, lies Government House. At the time of our arrival the western spurs of the hills gleamed gold and red.

Around this enormous circuit run trams filled with negroes and Hindus. Why populations, from Tokio to Stockholm, should go round and round, as soon as they get a chance, is one of the toughest problems the sincere sociologist has to solve. But they do. It's all progress. Whither? That is the destination known only to the Almighty.

Round the Savannah, a short way back from the dusty road, lie the houses of the wealthy, the fashionable side being on the west. For there is great wealth in Trinidad. Whatever one plants grows and can't be blown down, for the island is outside the hurricane zone. In many of these houses of beauty and luxury were we entertained. But

where there should have been manifested the gay responsiveness of pampered guests, most of us, I fear, displayed a polite and observable preoccupation. Jane said, referring to the four cousins:

"For well-bred people, they're merely rude. Sometimes I'm ashamed of 'em. They've got this treasure on the brain. When they do get the old stuff—gold and silver plunder from churches, a few gewgaws torn off women's necks and a bag or so of moidores and pieces of eight, the whole darned thing won't amount to more than five thousand pounds. Half a million! Binkie's turned them all mad."

"Toby's sane enough," said I.

"Oh, Toby. He's all right when he's out—but he won't go out. Much sooner go down to the club and smoke with the men there. But Binkie's on edge all the time, Hettie's eyes are fixed on some Golconda when she ought to be attending to the well-meaning man who's trying to talk to her, and young Nicholas is as nervous as a cat."

"It's rather romantic, after all," I ventured.

"Decent manners are the essence of Romance," Jane declared.

This little talk took place on the moonlit veranda of the hotel—a pleasant lounge, with rocking-chairs and little tables—about a week after our prospecting visit to the Cave. I was not the only one who had suffered. In my case it was sheer fatigue; but Binkie and Nicholas had each got a touch of fever and had been dosed with quinine. And, when people are afflicted with fever and quinine in comfortable quarters, they prefer to stay there. That's why Binkie was postponing his second expedition.

Other guests were lounging on the veranda. In the dim light the coloured waiters flitted from table to table with glasses in which ice tinkled pleasantly. Beyond in the shadow of shrubs, the fire-flies danced. The blooms of a poinsettia stood out black against the splendour of the moonlit heaven. We could see practically half-way across the Savannah.

Binkie strolled up, hands in pockets. I asked him to have a drink. He declined. He'd just had a whisky and soda with the doctor man.

"Queer chap. Born here and been here all his life except his hospital time in London. Knows everything that's to be known about fever. Those forests filthily dangerous. Anyhow he says I'll be quite fit again in a week . . . It's rather an abuse of hospitality, my dear Jane, to keep you here . . . If you're fed up, do make your own arrangements and let one or two of us find our way home."

Jane shrugged her shoulders. She was a woman of her word. She had brought the crowd out, and she would take them home. Possibly she might go for a cruise on her own in the meanwhile.

So that was settled. Binkie drew a chair—he had hitherto been standing.

"Chepstow"—that's the doctor—"isn't quite happy about young Nicholas. All nerves and no . . ." He paused.

"Guts," said Lady Jane.

"That's about it. Wanted to know if anything was worrying him. I know what's worrying him—the treasure. I tell you I'll be glad when I drop those sacks on the yacht."

Jane sighed a "So shall I."

"It's a strain on everybody. Even on Hettie, who's the calmest and most level-headed woman I know."

"That accounts for you three," said I. "What about Toby?"

"I wish to God he'd take a little more practical interest in the thing," he cried with some heat.

"You leave Toby alone," said Jane. "He's the only one of you except Tom (who doesn't count) that has got it screwed into his mind that I'm his hostess."

Indeed Toby had conducted himself like a perfectly gallant guest. He had carried her off on all sorts of motor expeditions, while the rest of us were fooling about at lunch, tea, tennis and cocktail parties. Perhaps—such is poor human nature—Toby was glad of her company, rather than that of the high society of the Island. You see —such is painted-tongued Rumour—it had got about at once that he was Major Boyle, *alias* "Palmyre," the famous designer. Women began to talk clothes to him, thinking he would like it. Toby liked it as much as the wife of a man who had been hanged, in the proverbial saying, appreciated genial conversation on hangman's nooses at her family dinner-table. There was one woman, a languorous Venezuelan, with the blood in her of every continent —even, perhaps, Asia—and the wife of a wealthy Levantine merchant, who, practising on him arts of seduction —she spoke perfect English—asked him to design a costume that would express her personality.

"My fee for an original design," said he, "is fifty guineas."

"You shall have it."

"Good," said Toby. And he drew his little drawing-pad from his pocket and sketched the figure of a penitent nun in which not a feature, nor the tip of a finger nor a toe was visible. He gave it to her and went away.

"Damn the vulgar woman," cried Toby, when he told me the incident. "At first I had the idea of drawing her a fig-leaf; but that might have amused her. Besides . . ." He shook his big shoulders expressively.

Anyhow, you can see why Toby didn't go out of his way to make himself popular in Trinidad society.

Most of the time he went off with Jones on jaunts of his own. He had found a motor-boat that could take him to "the Islands," at the mouth of the bay where there was good sea-fishing and bathing without danger from sharks.

I am pretty sure that Toby was as nervy as the other three over the treasure; but he had his own way of dealing with his condition.

"Where's Hettie?" Jane asked.

Binkie waved a vague westerly hand. "Playing bridge with the Wilsons." He looked at his watch. "By Jove, I promised to call for her. Good night, my dears."

He went off down the lazily humming veranda, down the front steps of the hotel and out of the gate. I laughed.

"Romance, my dear. Ill-mannered or not. Take it or leave it. There it is all the time. Hettie Dalrymple might do worse."

"If she gets her share of the treasure she'll be a fool to marry Binkie," said Jane. "Any independent woman would. If she doesn't, well—a detached woman with a child has got to live somehow."

I assented vaguely. Life at the moment was languorous

and free from care. I had received two cables that day. One from my family giving me the impression that they were radiantly happy, and the longer I stayed away from them the more radiantly happy they would be; the other from my brokers informing me that they had sold out my poor little £50 worth of shares in Peruvian Synthetic Platinum—or something of the sort—for £500, being assured they had reached the top of a bulled market. I had dined well. There is only one fish in the sea that can compete in lusciousness with the barracouta—and that is the pompano of the Gulf of Mexico. Jane had also contrived an agouti, or little wild pig. The evening was balmy, with a stirring of the air, and there floated over the veranda the faintest scent of jessamine.

Suddenly Jane touched my arm and pointed to two figures in the Savannah, some fifty yards away, the moon behind them casting fantastically long shadows.

"There's another pair," she said. "I didn't put the yacht into commission for a voyage to Cythera."

As the figures drew near I recognized Toby and Ruth. They crossed the road together in the coolest possible way. When they parted, she to the further side of the hotel, he to mount the front steps, he took off his hat with a friendly "good-night." He came up to us.

"Pleasant stroll about the Savannah?" asked Jane, with a touch of acidity.

"Very," he replied, sitting down. "What are you drinking, sir? I think I'll have some. Waiter!" He gave his order. "Ruth Tellifer, my dear Lady Jane, is a highly intelligent girl."

"She also happens to be my maid," said Jane.

"You may rest assured," said Toby, "that both of us have every conceivable kind of appreciation of the fact. So don't worry. But she also happens to be the first cousin of my man, Jones, who is following her like a dog, a humble and adoring dog, and she doesn't know what to do with him. He also seems to have something else on his mind which she can't get at. As I'm the only person in the world who, she thinks, can get at Jones, she comes to me. Or rather, when we quite accidentally bump up against each other as we did a quarter of an hour ago, she pans out about Jones."

"And that's that," said Jane, lighting a cigarette.

Toby bent forward. "That isn't quite as 'that' as you seem to think, my dear. I'm not out to seduce village maidens—or even to philander with them. In my trade I've had hole-and-corner suggestions, invitations—God knows what—enough to make a decent man sick. If ever I want a woman, I'll want her before the whole world, and there'll be no hole-and-cornering about it."

"But, my dear boy," said I, in gentle remonstrance. "Why this—let us say, fervid proclamation?"

Toby replied: "I don't want my hostess to think that I'm abusing her hospitality by making love to the maid who came to her on my recommendation. It's the sort of thing a decent man doesn't do."

Jane shook her wise, kind head, very attractive in its trim clipped greyness.

"Methinks the gentleman doth protest too much. Ruth is an unusual girl. I can understand any man being taken by her. I am, in a way, myself. She has distances . . ."

"That's just it," cried Toby. "You've got it in a word.

'Distances.' That's what I felt when I first came across her digging in the garden before her little cottage in Kent."

"And now," said Jane who was nothing if not direct, "you're concerned about her worrying over Jones's adoration for her?"

"It puts the girl into an unhappy position," said Toby, glass in hand. "That's obvious," he continued, setting it down after a long, cold draught. "He's a lovable chap, a pathetic chap. The human being who would hurt Jones willingly would be capable of torturing a child. What's the poor girl to do? . . . I give him the standard wages of a confidential man-servant—he hasn't a bean of his own, of course—and he spends Heaven knows what on presents for Ruth. He bought her lately a shark's tooth necklace at some little Chinese shop in the town, as a memento of the place. The beastly thing either came from the Pacific or from Birmingham. Fancy any educated young Englishwoman wearing a thing like that. How did she get away with it, without hurting his feelings? Well, the first night she wore it at dinner. The next day when he asked her to go out walking she wrapped it round her wrist and a few days later she stuck it on to some kind of bag."

"I saw it," exclaimed Lady Jane, "one day when she was going out. Most artistic. I wanted to know where she had picked it up—but of course I didn't like to ask. My Lord! How little we know of the folks around us."

"In this case," Toby went on, "Jones was pleased, flattered, gratified; but a girl can't go on cudgelling her brains all the time as to the means of pleasing, gratifying and flattering a man who is showering gift white elephants

all over her. . . . You see, my dear Lady Jane, I've got to protest in a way. You catch me walking in the moonlight with your maid. You had a perfect right to be sniffy . . ."

"Oh Toby, for God's sake, don't say that!" cried Jane on a lovely note of sincerity.

"You were," he laughed. "But now I've explained . . ."

She looked at her watch and rose. We rose too.

"Yes, now you've explained I think you're rather an ass to have let her talk about Jones all the time. Good-night, my dears."

She made a swift and commanding exit. We followed her receding figure down the thinned veranda, our mouths agape. We sat down. Toby called the waiter.

"They're all alike, the whole lot of them," said Toby.

"Lot of whom?"

"Women. I did think that Jane Crowe could see things from a man's point of view."

"I'm not so sure that she doesn't," said I.

Toby flamed round on me—the nasty look in his eyes.

"If you think I'm carrying on a vulgar amour with this girl, say so—and I'll clear out of the Island by the very next boat."

With the smile and gesture of old authority, I soothed him. I spoke to him like a dozen grandfathers, uncles and elder brothers rolled into one. He was a man who had lived a life of unimpeachable honour and integrity. But he was also a young man with the spring-sap of youth in his blood, a very human young animal, for all the cynical disillusions resulting from his trade. And, on the other hand, there was a magnificent female young animal with the spring-

sap of youth in her blood working, without any regard to the "distances" and whatever other psychological claims to distinction she might possess.

"You find," said I, "a common ground of interest in Jones. There are limits to one man's interest in another. A long life has taught me this. There's no folly so insensate as that of a man who interferes with another man's pursuit of a woman. Provided, of course—a question which, in this case, doesn't arise—that the interferer doesn't want the woman for himself. Otherwise the man's a fool. He's letting off revolvers in the dark."

Toby grinned and finished his drink.

"Perhaps you're right, sir. I got into the habit of thinking so, many years ago."

To turn the conversation, I asked him what the girl meant by saying Jones had something on his mind. Toby didn't know. He would try to find out. He had gathered that it lay apart from his apparently unrequited affection for Ruth.

"He has been rather queer the last few days," said Toby. "Ever since the expedition."

"Why should he worry about that?"

Toby puffed at his pipe. "It's as if this rotten treasure-hunt is getting on everybody's nerves."

"But Jones knows nothing about it?"

"Of course not. Not even Ruth. No one but the six of us."

I rose, it being more or less my bedtime.

"I hope Binkie will get well soon and have the matter over, one way or the other."

"I hope so, too," said Toby.

But Binkie did not appear to be in the violent hurry so much desired. He must, at first, said he, establish his little reputation as a man of science.

"While you're doing that," said Lady Jane, "I'll have time for a leisurely cruise."

"Do you know," said Binkie in his brisk way, "that's the best thing you can do. As I've explained, I must work alone—with Nicholas as my assistant. It'll divert everybody's mind."

"We'll start as soon as we can," said Jane.

But before we started, one or two things happened.

Dr. Chepstow firmly refused to allow the convalescent, and, according to Jane Crowe, gutless Nicholas to venture a second time through the malarial forest.

"Of course, if he insists, I can't restrain him by force," said he; "but I'll hand his sister, Mrs. Dalrymple, a perfectly good death certificate before he sets out."

Binkie asked what the devil he was to do. Of course there was Toby—the ideal fellow-digger. But Toby seemed curiously disinclined to accompany him; said Binkie knew all about it—only wanted a hefty fellow to help him shift rocks and fill sacks and keep his mouth shut—and, to the surprise of everybody, suggested Jones.

When I got Toby alone in the bar, I questioned him. At first he said:

"As man to man, Binkie's all right; but as commanding officer I couldn't stick him—and he'd be a sort of god almighty of a commanding officer. He'd want to sit in that loathsome cave for days pretending to study birds and rocks, so as to establish confidence in the cocoa people. I'd go mad and kill him. Besides, Jane wants me particu-

larly to go with her. God knows why. Anyhow, she's one of the dearest things that ever happened not to be born a man, and—well—there you are."

There I was. But why Jones? Toby countered by asking me who else was competent and available. Hettie? Of course I could take it on if I liked. I ejaculated a pious "God forbid." I imagined myself in the pitch blackness under the circular illumination of little electric torches, sweating away, with spade and pick-axe in a world of rocks and guano and ice-cold water and the hell-scream of frightened goat-suckers, in order to unearth a treasure belonging to other people. Oh no! Nothing doing.

"Lady Jane's out of it," laughed Toby. "So by a process of elimination we get to Jones."

I saw that he was keeping something back from me. I knew Toby in his queer moods and reticences.

"What it all comes to, my dear fellow," said I, "is this, that in spite of your most excellent reasons, you're really shirking your job."

Then he erupted like a volcano and the truth came out. Jones had begged and prayed him to let him go. I asked why. That was what he had on his mind, Toby replied. He had tackled Jones in their uncanny ideographic language, and discovered that he had been aware, for some time, of this treasure-hunt. But how?

You may remember that Toby had been kind enough to lend him to me, as valet, while Binkie and Nicholas took whatever service our hostess, Jane Crowe, provided. But valets, like every other civilized creature, must have their days of freedom. So, now and then, an alien manservant

busied himself with my clothes, and now and then Jones attended to Binkie. In fact, I think in the hotel Jones, being a good fellow with a sense of responsibility and a pride in his craft, superintended the valeting of Binkie and Nicholas. In the course of his inspective duties, therefore, as he explained to Toby, he had come across two of Binkie's books lying open on his table: one at the page containing the map of Trinidad and the north-east line terminating at the picture of a bird; and the other at the page on which there was the crude drawing of the little devil dancing on top of a chest.

"How he tumbled to the fact that morning, when he put out riding-breeches for us, that we were going treasure-hunting, I don't know. But he did. So he told me yesterday. And I was so keen to test him that I pretended not to understand his aerograph and made him reproduce it on paper. There was a flag and cross-bones just as I had read it at the point of his finger in the air. What do you think of it?"

Even though I had been for some time on intimate terms with the efficient yet afflicted man, I was amazed at the accuracy of his deductions. That was what he was trying to tell Ruth, you see; his uncanny divination of the object of our voyage.

"I couldn't get much further with him," said Toby. "After all, fine shades of thought can't be expressed in air-pictures. But when I asked him whether he'd like to help Binkie dig for the treasure he was delighted. I told him, of course, the sort of thing he'd have to expect—not so difficult with a pictorial mind like his. He has been danc-

ing on air ever since. At first, the idea of leaving me for a while seemed to disconcert him. But I assured him that he was serving me by taking my place."

"And Binkie?" I asked.

"Binkie's delighted, too. He doesn't want any of us to interfere with him. To him Jones is a sort of Robot. But," said Toby after a gulp of cocktail, "I've given him to understand that if he doesn't treat Jones with exceeding tenderness, I'll throw him, on the homeward voyage, treasure or no treasure, overboard into the Atlantic."

Jane Crowe was a woman who acted swiftly. *Nautilus* was to sail the next day for a carefully planned week's cruise among the Islands, at the end of which we hoped to find Binkie at the hotel with his Ali Baba sacks of precious stones masquerading as geological specimens.

Almost at the last moment Nicholas refused to accompany us. Dr. Chepstow used justifiably bad language. A week at sea, during the prevailing weather of soft breezes would do him all the good in the world. Going a bit further into the young man's condition, he diagnosed a possible touch of the sun. None of us could tell him that Nicholas had this treasure-hunt on the brain. He told his sister that, if he left the place, he would go mad. He could stay behind and help Binkie from head-quarters. . . . He went about like a youth distraught. Once he raved to Toby.

"All you people are pre-war. You can carry on with your old traditions and your old limpet attachments to life. I—and my generation—come after the war, into an upside-down world that hasn't any particular use for

us. We'd like to upset the whole beastly scheme of things so that we could get a chance. But we can't. We're paid twopence to buy a threepenny loaf of bread. And all in order to pay for your damned war. It's unjust. We've got to live. You mayn't see the necessity, but we do. I'm out to rob, filch, steal, suck anything I can get from the blasted world. Here's a fortune waiting for me. I can't think of anything else."

"What will you do with it when you get it?" asked Toby.

The young man clamped his fists into his thin sallow cheeks.

"I'll either devote it to raising a hell of a revolution, or I'll sink into a bloody bourgeois like my fathers before me. I haven't made up my mind yet."

"I see," said Toby. "But before you train the young women of 'Palmyre' in machine-gun practice, I hope you'll give me a friendly notice. I should also like to say that history has a habit of repeating itself, and it's the bourgeoisie, with its common-sense philosophy of life, that gets there all the time."

"Oh God! You make me sick," cried Nicholas, and went off.

Later Hettie came to us.

"My dear—I can't leave Nick. I daren't. I'd love to come with you—but you see, Jane dear . . ."

Jane saw. Nicholas would have been but an indifferent fellow-passenger. Hettie, of course, must look after her brother.

"Naturally, my dear," said Jane.

And a moment afterwards, when we were alone:

"What the devil she sees in Binkie I can't understand. Anyhow, it's her funeral."

Thus it came to pass that Binkie and Jones and Hettie and Nicholas were left behind while the *Nautilus*, on her second cruise, carried Jane Crowe, Toby, Ruth and myself.

CHAPTER XI

BINKIE, Hettie and Nicholas accompanied us to the quay to see us off. There was poor Jones, who had made a previous journey in the launch with Ruth, in charge of luggage. In his semi-uniform white ducks and yachting-cap, standing out in the sunshine, he looked the well-knit, tough figure of a man in the prime of physical health. He opened car-doors, guided the two ladies through the dusty stench of quayside cargoes and stood at attention when, just before getting into the launch, Toby turned with a last word of admonition. Until our return he was to be Binkie's man, having taken, as it seemed to me, an oath of fealty in the old Saxon fashion. They made their queer fingerings in the air. Toby nodded good-bye. Jones's right hand went up in his modification of the military salute. But I noticed that his face, instead of wearing its usual pleasant smile, was set in a stern gravity.

The launch sped away amid the hand and handkerchief wavings of our three associates. Lady Jane squeezed Toby's knee.

"It's awfully good of you to give up the excitement of treasure-hunting for the sake of a bored old woman."

Toby declared that it wasn't good of him, that she was never bored, and that he had never had the misfortune to meet the old woman to whom she seemed to refer. She looked at me.

"Nice chap, isn't he, Tom?" We laughed. She went on:

"I may be horrid—but what a relief it'll be to get rid of Binkie for a few days!"

We discussed Binkie idly as the launch chugged its way through the grey waters to the yacht that gleamed ahead of us, a white thing of exquisite lines.

"He's too crisp," said Jane. "Like the beastly thin super-toast they bring you at restaurants."

"Anyhow," said I, "I hope he'll find his treasure pretty quick and put us all out of our misery."

Toby laughed. "He'll find it all right. But if he just happens on it without theodolites, sextants, barometers, compasses, logarithms, and a few more cryptograms, he'll be the most disappointed man on earth."

"Well, well," said I, "he's a fussy little chap. But he's as kind-hearted a man as one could wish to meet."

"If you talk like that, Tom," said Jane, "I'll be sorry I didn't leave you ashore."

All this was frivolous talk as became a golden morning with the sweet air rushing past our faces and the swish of the parting water in our ears. But I must confess I didn't look forward, with a sense of loss, to a few Binkie-less days.

We went on board. The red-faced captain received us, delighted at the prospect of the cruise. The weather would hold and all was well.

At the top of the companion-way stood Ruth, sphinx-like in her demure beauty.

"Everything all right?"

"Yes, my lady."

They disappeared. Toby and I threw ourselves in deck-chairs beneath the awning. It was hot. The rush of the

motor-launch through the air had given us a false impression of coolness. The head-steward came through the smoking-room door, by which we were sitting, with an engaging smile and iced drinks with cooling straws in them. Jane is one of those master-women who have a genius for commanding perfect service. In her house the dogs wag their tails at you in courteous welcome. A wire-haired terrier called Iddles always takes precedence of the butler in announcing you. He did it with ceremonious gravity. Since he came into Jane's life, I have always thought that Iddles should have been the perfect name of the perfect butler. . . .

Jane came upon us in her brisk way.

"Oh, don't get up. What are you drinking?" She took a sip at Toby's glass. "Gin and coco-nut water. By Jove, that's good. Ring a bell and order me some." And as Toby went into the smoking-room, she said to me hurriedly: "Come down for a minute, Tom. I want to speak to you."

I followed her down the companion-way, to her large and luxurious cabin, where Ruth stood, somewhat drooping and twisting her fingers.

"Tell the General what you've been telling me, my dear," said Jane. "He has got daughters and has been used to soldiers which I haven't."

Ruth looked at me in her fearless, direct way.

"I should like to get back to England, as soon as I can, Sir Thomas. I think I can pick up a steamer at Barbados. I'm not asking her ladyship to pay my fare. Only I don't want to return to Trinidad."

I cried in amazement: "But my good girl—why?"

Distress came into her eyes. "I can only ask you to promise, as her ladyship has promised, not to say anything to Major Boyle."

"If it's good enough for her ladyship to promise," said I, "it's good enough for me. I give you my word. Go ahead. What's Major Boyle been doing?"

Her lips moved in a smile, a damned Giaconda sort of smile, I thought.

"Nothing. It's his man, Jones."

I have already told you what I gathered from Toby about Jones's attentions to the girl, his presents of shark-tooth necklaces and similar embarrassing objects.

I said with a smile: "I suppose Jones has been making love to you?"

"That's so," she replied.

"You'll allow an old man," said I, "to remark that a pretty and charming young girl like yourself can't expect to go about the world without young men being attracted by you. You'd think something had gone wrong if they weren't."

A flush came into her cheeks.

"That's quite true, Sir Thomas. But up to now I've been able to deal with them. When one comes along I'd like to marry—that may be different . . . Anyhow, I can take care of myself. But I don't know how to deal with Jones. He frightens me."

"Both of you sit down," Jane commanded. "And Tom, don't interrupt. Now Ruth."

"It's this way . . ."

She told a clear and disconcerting story.

The night before, while we were at dinner, the two of

them were occupied, one in Toby's room and the other in Lady Jane's—the rooms adjoining—with their duties of arranging, packing and whatnot. The doors, for coolness, were left open. There was a small cabin trunk which, owing to her ladyship's overflow of contents, she found some difficulty in fastening. She fetched him from the next room, asking his ever-ready help, and in a minute or two, between them, they got the refractory hasp into the slot. As they rose from their bending down, she smiled her thanks. In a second he had thrown his arms around her and was kissing her. She was strong enough to thrust him off, and grip his wrists, while her eyes blazed with anger and indignation and her lips uttered words which he could not hear, but whose purpose seemed to reach his intelligence. Suddenly he began to shake like a man stricken by some strange malady. His strength relaxed. She released his wrists. He sank on his knees humbly and kissed the hem of her skirt, and then looked up at her with the eyes of an adoring dog and clasped his hands beseechingly.

Softened, she lost her anger, touched his head, and shook hers in token of the kind woman's inevitable "No." He arose half dazed; then began to talk to her. She had learned a little of his air-language. Well, at any rate, it doesn't need a common speech for a man to inform a woman without doubt or question that he loves her passionately, that she is the beginning and end of his existence.

If things had ended there, Ruth said dispassionately, she wouldn't have troubled her ladyship. But they didn't end there.

She had told him to the best of her ability, by the sign language, that anything beyond friendship and cousinship between them was impossible, and, dismissing him as kindly as she could, turned to her duties in the room still littered with tissue-paper, cardboard boxes, empty sachets and other paraphernalia of feminine packing. She thought he had gone. Unnerved for a moment by the emotional scene, for no woman can remain unstirred by an ordinary man's sincere declaration of love, to say nothing of the all but grotesque intensity of the passion of this inarticulate man, she sat on the edge of the bed and rested arm and face on the foot-rail. She was deeply sorry for Jones, heart-sore about him. He was lovable and kindly, and she would have given him all but the ungivable.

On the bed, amid the confusion that under her trained fingers would soon be reduced to quiet order, lay an open dressing-case. At the bottom of it, her ladyship was accustomed to have packed the four or five lightly framed photographs which she took on her travels. Among them was one of Major Boyle in uniform.

I have told you how Jane Crowe had taken Toby to her heart. There was the photograph now in her cabin, stuck on a table with those of her father and mother and a favourite niece.

Ruth got up wearily, with a sigh, and taking the photograph of Toby from its place, was about to deposit it in the dressing-case, when Jones rushed in and clawed it from her. Apparently he had been watching her from the door all the time. They faced each other, her anger

rekindled, his dark eyes burning like one who is mad. Suddenly he threw up his hand to bid her stay, and swerving apart from her kissed the photograph of Toby over and over again with an incredible fervour of devotion. He gave it back to her, holding her with his eyes.

And as clear as man could say, whose only language was gesture, he said:

"For him, I will lay down my life; but if there is anything between you two, it is you that I'll kill."

He tore open his collar and lugged by its steel chain the reliquary and the oval medallion of the Virgin which he always wore about his neck, and kissed the latter in confirmation of his vow.

He went out, slamming the door, and into Toby's room whose door he slammed also; and she saw nothing of Jones till the morning when he appeared, impersonal and punctilious as became the valet of one of her mistress's guests. But she had not slept all night.

"You see now, Sir Thomas, why I asked you to promise to say nothing to Major Boyle, and how for two reasons, I can't remain in her ladyship's service. It's an impossible position."

"It's a beast of a mess, my girl," said Jane, "and I'll do whatever I can for you."

That ended the interview.

Jane and I went out and leaned for a few minutes over the side. The yacht was already under weigh, and we were nearing the islands.

"To tell Toby or not to tell Toby, that is the question," she said.

I looked up at her horrified.

"Good God! we've given our word. Where is woman's sense of honour?"

She retorted: "And where is man's common sense?"

"Anyhow," said I severely, "Toby's not to be told."

Her weather-beaten face, with its weather-filled blue eyes, turned to me mockingly.

"Is that barrack-square or orderly room?"

"It's G.H.Q. decency," said I.

"Well, seeing that you're old enough to be my grandfather"—which, as she was considerably over fifty was at once untrue, unjust and uncomplimentary—"I'll submit to your archaic judgment." She took my arm. "Let us go up and find Toby. Also lunch. Do you know"—she halted me at the foot of the companion-way—"it wouldn't be a very great loss to the world if Binkie and Jones quarrelled over the treasure and the three of them went down into a bottomless abyss."

I called her a cruel and cynical woman.

"Will you kindly tell me what I'm to do without Ruth?" she asked. "Would you like to be at the tender mercies of any little coloured girl picked up in the islands?"

"If she were neat and deft," said I, "she mightn't be unattractive."

We found Toby lazily happy. He rose and shook his tussore suit like a great brown dog.

"Once my idea of bliss," said he, "was to get away from making women's clothes. Now it is to escape from the scientific pursuit of hidden treasure. For God's sake don't let us talk of it till we get back."

We didn't talk of it—at least not more than human lapses into the instinctive permitted; but we thought of it a good deal, even Jane and I who, by the finding of it would not benefit one pennypiece. But the mere words "Buried Treasure" convey a thrill: we've hunted it all our lives, from the time we were told the story of Ali Baba on our mother's knee. We've all been bloody pirates in our tender years. We've also permitted our female belongings to be bloody pirates too, either in the disguise of powder-monkeys or—rare privilege—pirates' wives. The idea must fire all but the most asbestos-protected imagination. There are minds I know impervious to the flame—it takes all sorts to make a world—such minds as delight in calculating how many drops from a medicine bottle it would take to fill up the basin of the Lake of Geneva, and in counting the number of individual bits of stone that make up the mosaics inside and outside San Marco in Venice. . . . Now here was real, authentic pirate treasure—for John Gregory Jorico was unquestionably the bloody pirate of our childhood's dreams—and we were going in quest of it. Of course it was exciting.

"It's damn silly, I know," said Jane Crowe; "but it interferes with my sleep. And though he gives you to understand that he doesn't care a hang, it must interfere with Toby's. And he has the sensitive artistic temperament."

"He hasn't," said I, trotting out an old idea of mine. "The artistic temperament is that of one who just can't express himself, an ineffectual, a dreamer and not a doer. Toby has the temperament of an artist, which is a vastly different thing. He imagines and executes. So does a great soldier. Toby's also a soldier. There's not much difference

between Napoleon and Michael Angelo. They lost themselves in the vision of their job. They knew how to do it. They did it. And then they went to bed and thought no more about it and slept like dogs."

"That's very interesting," replied Jane, "but like most men you argue away from the point. The fact remains that you, with your temperament of a soldier"—she emphasized the phrase—"and Toby with his temperament both of a soldier and an artist, and I with the temperament of nothing at all save that of a cold-headed elderly female, are worrying ourselves sick over this rotten treasure."

At this turn of this particular conversation—we had been a couple of days out—Toby sauntered up, pipe in mouth. He waved an arm.

"My God! What happens to a man who has had as much beauty as he can stand and still goes on drinking it in?"

"Unless he can throw it up in some way he goes mad," said Jane.

Toby produced a small canvas which he had held behind his back, and grinned.

"I've been trying to." He handed it to Jane. "It's rotten."

"It is," she said. "But it has done you good."

I looked over her shoulder. It was as uninspired a seascape as ever I've seen. Now, if he had painted a rock with a group of sea-nymphs clad in the latest Creations of Seaweed, he would have produced a little masterpiece.

"Yes, rotten," said Jane, after a pause. "The effects of surfeit generally are."

He took the canvas from her and skimmed it lightheartedly overboard. He laughed.

"I'll carry on with it, anyhow. Just look."

On the starboard beam the sun was arising from the sea which glowed deep indigo, melting on the horizon into a violet sky of aching beauty. And away to the left, far, far in the distance lay an enchanted island, caught in the sunlight of glittering emerald slopes encircled by diamond surf.

"If I saw this all day, every day, for twenty years, I'd justify my existence. I think by then I could paint it."

He slouched away and leaned over the rail. I rose presently to stretch my legs. Far away aft, on the deck, I saw Ruth leaning, chin cupped in hands, on the same rail, and staring at the same Island of Fairyland.

What matters it to tell of the Islands, Tobago, Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia . . . which we saw either at a distance or visited on our cruise? Our emotional and social experiences have no place in this record of unusual adventure and unusual interaction of human characters. Except for the turtle-back shaped, low-lying, white-coral formed Barbados, all are mixed up in my mind in a phantasmagoria of blue water and luxuriant mountain greenery and flashes of white ports and negro boatmen and smelling wharves and pleasant hosts and cool verandas, and the kindliest fruits of the earth and iced-drinks and palms and palms and palms; and of returns to indigo seas and of nights in a cool cabin, rocked to heavenly sleep as in the gentlest cradle devised by God for the comfort of an old soldier.

No. Like the minutes of a well-conducted Council

Meeting, you must take the globe-trotter's details as read.

The things germane to my story, and really, for all the extraneous beauty and delight, uppermost in my mind, were my observations of incidents and my reflections on the queer webs that bound together the destinies of my fellow-travellers.

You see, when we started from London there were only six of us; Jane and myself who, standing outside, didn't count; and the four treasure-hunting descendants of old Ancestor Jorico, who did. Jones and Ruth, each an interesting individual, stood, like us two elders, outside the essential scheme of things. But now they seemed to have been caught up by the threads of the web in an all but inextricable fashion. Just look at the situation. Let me put it before you, and you will find that I, fond in my elderly way of the whole lot of them, was justified in puzzling over its complication.

First there was Binkie. You may say that he had an *idée fixe* on the Jorico Treasure, to the localizing of which he had devoted two or three years of unremitting industry. But his idea was not too fixed to prevent him from falling decorously and Binkie-ishly in love with his widowed cousin, Hettie Dalrymple.

Now even her calm nerves were all on edge over the treasure. Yet I doubt whether she wouldn't have come away with us if it hadn't been for Binkie. I can't understand how any woman could adore Binkie. But Hettie obviously did. Her decision not to leave her brother was determined by a wild desire not to leave Binkie.

This brings us to Nicholas. Here we had a young man coming into an indeterminate post-war world, morbidly

groping after some standard of values, and his nerves torn to shreds by the possibility of finding it through the possession of a great fortune.

More important, to me at any rate, was Toby, a sane soldier and artist; *vide* my exposition to Jane Crowe. He wanted a fortune like anybody else. It would relieve him from his hated profession. But he kept his nerves under perfect control. He was, in many respects, a misogynist, being in daily contact with the worst side of women. One section seemed to regard him as a superior sort of male harem attendant; from another section he could have formed, as Sultan, a tidy little harem of his own. Figuratively he spat all kinds of distastes out of his mouth when he left "Palmyre." But now, look you, he came into contact with a great feminine Thing outside his purview of woman. She was big and strong and good to look on, just as he was big and strong and good to look on. What might have been going on between them I knew no more than what I have done my best to tell you. She was the cousin of his mysterious man, Jones; and, as her sponsor to Lady Jane, he was interested in her in an ordinary, kindly human way. He could not maintain towards her the attitude of polite aloofness that would have been correct if she had been any unknown maid in attendance on Lady Jane. He had established with her personal relations, which, although clean and honest, were, none the less, unusually intimate. In some vague way, he stood for her as her defender. Meanwhile, except for the nervous strain that found outlet in painting horrible daubs of sea, sky and sunshine, he seemed perfectly happy.

For the time I gave Ruth up. Whether she was a dis-

turbing factor in Toby's life I had no opportunity of judging. How could I, or anyone else, tell whether her heart beat quicker at the sight of Toby or the sound of his voice? Into the man Jones's life she was most certainly a disturbing factor. She dropped into its quiet pool like a piece of pure sodium, causing the devil of an explosion. Here she was, frightened to death of Jones, and worrying Jane to ship her to England at any and every port.

I was greatly concerned with Jones, the Enigmatic. That his soul was torn with passionate love for Ruth, there could be no question. None either that he was jealous of Toby to the point of madness. Yet Toby was his god. Otherwise why should he have kissed Toby's portrait with the extravagant devotion of a Man Friday? And, adoring Toby and eating out his heart for Ruth, why should he have pleaded so earnestly to be Binkie's companion in the hunt for the Buried Treasure? Why had he abandoned Ruth, the light of his life, to the possible embraces of his fiercely beloved master?

So what could Jane Crowe and I do except talk ourselves sick when Toby wasn't with us? When he was with us we played a chouette (three players) of Rubicon Bézique for hours together. Toby, in high good humor, took our money.

By ourselves we argued the Ruth problem. Of course the girl was frightened. Jones, a potential crater of volcanic fires, promised to strangle her if he caught her out with Toby. But why should she be afraid of being caught out with Toby, when Toby had sworn to us by all his gods that he was no vulgar seducer of maid-servants?

"There must be something in it," said Jane. "Otherwise

why didn't she tell Jones he was a jealous idiot? Easy enough. All she had to do was to laugh at him and wipe her feet on Toby's photograph. But she seemed to take it lying down."

"I'll be glad," said I, "to get back to my self-sacrificing yet quite contented wife and family."

Incidentally I may mention that Jane Crowe nursed a legitimate grievance against young Nicholas. He had shipped as wireless expert. He was the only one of us who, on the voyage out, had earned his keep; and he had done it conscientiously and thoroughly. On the strength of his qualifications, self-proclaimed (and afterwards proved), she had engaged no professional operator. Now, in these hurrying days a ship without wireless is apt to regard itself as a ship without a rudder. The *Nautilus* was cut off for twelve hours at a time from communication with the outside world, because Nicholas had failed her. Of course the Owner, Lady Jane Crowe, might have insisted on his returning to his duties. But Jane was a kindly soul. She also reflected that a jumpy, wool-gathering wireless operator might cause less confusion ashore. But the fact remained that the yacht was wirelessless.

You will observe how science in her progress tramples ruthlessly over pure literary English.

But Ruth was the ever-recurring problem in poor Jane Crowe's mind. Steamers don't run from West Indian Islands to England every five minutes like trains from Oxford Circus to the Tottenham Court Road. We had to head to Port of Spain with Ruth still on board.

Eventually Toby came up to us, somewhat flustered. What the devil was the matter with Ruth? Wanted to be

shipped back to England at once. He couldn't get a word of explanation out of her. Not a shadow of dissatisfaction, from her point of view, between herself and Lady Jane. . . . Why?

"The girl's just homesick," said Jane. "Wants her mother, Kent, primroses, hops—what else grows in Kent? Men of Kent . . ."

"Oh, rot!" cried Toby, swerving aside, his hands in his pockets.

"Why shouldn't she be lonely?" said Jane.

With malice aforethought, I remarked: "I don't see how she can be lonely with thirty or forty perfectly good-looking young men on board."

I saw an angry flush mount into Toby's brown cheeks.

"Ruth isn't at all that kind of girl, sir."

"Of course she isn't," Jane declared warmly. "She's unique. I must confess I was afraid of her at first. . . . You see, my own maid, Elvira, is—well—if she was the last woman in the world and her lot was cast with the last man in the world, she'd die an old maid. She's that sort. For my purposes, ideal. On the other hand, once in an emergency I took a flibberty-gibbet of a maid on a cruise and the whole ship's company were like flies all over her. I had to shoo them away in order to get hold of her. And I had to shoo her away, too, at the next port and fend for myself for the rest of the voyage. . . . But Ruth, she's entirely different. Unique, as I've said. She's lonely. Misses companionship of her own sex. Perfectly natural."

Toby hunched his broad shoulders.

"Perhaps you're right, but I can't understand it. It

seems damn silly. We're not going to be out here for the rest of time. I wish to God we were."

"Thanks," said Jane, with her weather-beaten smile; "you're the only one of the crowd except Tom who doesn't seem to be fed up with me."

What could Toby do but make gallant response? The question of Ruth was shelved for the moment.

But her immediate disposal remained a problem. It was half solved by Jane promising that she should stay on the yacht instead of accompanying her to the hotel, until a passage to England could be found.

When Toby heard this he sought her out.

I only heard of it much later, for you must always bear in mind I am writing this account of the Jorico Treasure mainly from the frank confidences of Toby and of the others concerned.

Toby sought her out.

"My dear good girl," said he, "what is the meaning of it all? I can more or less understand that you're bored to tears, fed up with the trip—though why, God only knows. And Lady Jane will send you home by the first available steamer. But why sulk on board the yacht in the meanwhile instead of attending to your obvious duty to her ladyship?"

She said half despairingly: "You may think me a fool—anything you like. I don't care. Shall I tell you why?" She faced him. "Those coloured servants. I can't stand them. They give me the creeps."

He gripped her shoulders. "Any of the men been . . . ?"

She shook herself free, moving her head and saying neither yes nor no.

"They give me the creeps," she repeated.

He yielded the point.

"Well, that's a reason, anyhow. But why didn't you tell us before?"

"It seemed silly—and I don't like to look silly."

He could not but believe her. Yet, meeting her eyes, he said:

"You're looking at this moment less silly than any woman I've ever seen in my life. And I've seen a good many."

She turned away for a moment, and then with a return she flashed:

"Perhaps it's not silly for a white girl to resent the familiarities of coloured men. What next?"

"My dear child," said Toby. "If that's all there's to it, you're quite justified. But why you can't stay comfortably on the yacht, where every man Jack aboard respects you, until we sail, I can't understand. To want to leave Lady Jane in the lurch on the home voyage and get to England on your own is the outer limit of unreason. As a sensible woman, don't you see it?"

She buried her face in her hands, and to his bewilderment and dismay began to cry. He put his arm round her.

"My dear child . . . For God's sake . . . What's the matter? There's nothing to be afraid of. If there is, come to me . . ."

She dried her eyes with the palm of a hand.

"I'm a fool. You must forgive me."

She freed herself proudly.

"If I could catch any one of the coloured servants who have frightened you, I'd break his damned neck," said Toby. "But here you're safe. Just stay on board until we sail. Lady Jane'll agree to it like a shot. It's only sensible, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," said Ruth, a rat driven into a corner.

"Besides . . ." said Toby.

"What?"

"I'm responsible for you to Lady Jane."

She drew herself up. "You want me to carry on as usual."

"If you don't, you won't be the woman I think you are."

Their eyes met for some seconds.

"All right," she said. "I'll go to the hotel with her ladyship."

She left him and walked swiftly down the deck. He followed her for a step or two and called out:

"And if you're in any more difficulties, for God's sake come to me."

She turned her head.

"Thank you, sir," she answered.

So that was that. But neither Jane nor myself knew it. And when Ruth came to Jane in complete surrender we were entirely in the dark as to her motives.

We were in the dark, too, about Binkie. We had received no message from him at any of our ports of call, and when we anchored off Port of Spain we knew nothing of his doings.

"The blighter loves to imitate the Almighty and move

in a mysterious way," said Toby, as we prepared to leave by the launch. "Sometimes I'd like to wring his neck."

It wasn't often that Toby betrayed his nervous self.

CHAPTER XII

HERE now I must give you a transcript of the often-repeated and detailed narrative of Binkie.

As soon as his health was re-established and his plans completed—that is to say, three days after our starting on the cruise—Binkie set forth unostentatiously on his quest, with Jones in attendance. Odds and ends of people in Port of Spain knew that Commander Sir Gregory Binkley, Baronet, the well-known scientist—he had himself industriously created the legend of his scientific reputation among the fairly simple-minded and, at any rate, not vastly interested white community—was visiting the remote Cave des Diablotins in order to write a Report on the geology of the cave and on the habits and customs of the strange birds with which it was peopled, which was to be read before the Royal Society. Now, in the far-flung bits of Empire, the Royal Society, the Royal Academy and the Royal Family are words to conjure with. There is a kind of spiritual atmospheric refraction through which things ordinary to the Londoner are seen in perhaps a false perspective and proportion by the dweller in the distant tropics. To take a physical analogy: you think you see the sun sink below the horizon in a blaze of glory. As a matter of sober fact, you don't see the simple old sun at all. You see his image refracted by means of all kinds of atmospheric complications. . . . Thus, by a well-

placed whisper or so about the Royal Society, Binkie managed to envelop himself in a refracting atmosphere of awe.

He nearly fell a victim to his own inventions. Tourists staying at the Queen's Park Hotel naturally heard of his scientific mission, and one or two of an inquiring turn of mind desired to accompany him. But Binkie drew such a picture of the perils by poison-flowers, snakes, mosquitoes, wild-cats, deadly ants, and the certainty of life-long malaria for the rash and non-immunized traveller, that he managed to clear his field. He also had ordered young Nicholas to play up. And Nicholas would make much of his natural leanness, and point to his wasted frame and gaunt cheeks and fevered eyes and tell of the dangers through which he had passed in order to visit a stalactite cave of no more general interest than the Cheddar Gorge at home.

Binkie, as I may have indicated before, believed in the art of preparation. I think he might have been quite an important general in the reign of Louis XIV.

Well, Binkie went off with Jones one morning in a car, *sans tambours ni trompettes*, and after the twenty-four miles or so to the spot beyond the little town of Arima, found the waiting guide with the mules for riding and the mules for baggage in accordance with his flawless prevision.

They reached the cocoa plantation. Mr. Henrico received them with hospitable courtesy. Binkie dismissed the guide, now far less a guide than a mere baggage attendant, and took up his quarters in the room of Mr. Henrico junior, now a student at the Royal Agricultural Institute.

Jones, old campaigner, dossed cheerfully on a bed of cocoa-sacks spread for him in a primitive lumber room. Binkie had brought with him his own provisions, including his little ice-making plant, and every dry battery lantern (with refills) capable of beaming electric light that could be found in Port of Spain. He had guns and spades and pickaxes and crowbars and hatchets; also a pocket-book containing, in his own cipher, a *précis* of the information he had laboriously acquired from the Jorico relics.

He started operations as a man interested in nothing but the scientific aspects of the cave. Jones, pale and disciplined automaton, obeyed him without question. He could scarcely question Binkie, who didn't know his language. Yet even Binkie could see that his preliminary activities were regarded by Jones as some kind of necessary bluff. Jones held the cave against the curiosity of the natives—chiefly children. Binkie made great stir with his gun, shooting the diablotins. Such as could be retrieved on all but inaccessible rocks, he entrusted to Mr. Henrico. The older birds must be split open and dried in the sun so that they could eventually be stuffed and presented to the British Museum of Natural History, and the young and tender ones could be eaten. Wherein Binkie was wise, for the young diablotin is most luscious eating, with fat on it thick like the fat of a pampered lamb. The hell of the reverberations in the cave and the scream of the affrighted birds half-deafened Binkie; but Jones, who could hear nothing, found great amusement in the sight of the flurry and scurry of a thousand wings.

Then they would solemnly go geologizing and return

from the cave with odds and ends of rocks and queer-shaped icicles of stalactites.

After the first day or so no one, not even an idle child, took interest in their activities. Their route from the mouth of the cave along the tiny icy stream of the Aripo River, whose source gushed from the earth away in the perhaps unexplored depths of the long black cavern, to the Spot of Treasure became as familiar as the passages of a house.

There was the rock, some fifteen feet up from the bed of the stream, indicated with mathematical precision. Twenty hand lamps and torches cunningly disposed around it only accentuated the immense darkness of the cave; for a twist, soon after the mouth, extinguished the daylight. Beyond the pitiful area of their illumination reigned the blackness of incredible night. Imagination exaggerated the vastness a million-fold. It was an infinite, cold and awful Erebus with nothing visible save the myriad paired points of yellow and non-illuminating specks. It might have been chaos before God said His first word: "Let there be light."

In their little area of flare, showing up the rock, the two men worked, with spade and pickaxe and crowbar, at a great stone slab rounded roughly on the top like a turtle's back. More or less horizontal fissures beneath gave encouraging signs that once it could be lifted; but in the course of generations it had become cemented to the surrounding rock by the petrified guano. This jagged layer of concrete had first to be removed. They stripped to their waists and sweated in the chill, stagnant air, and for drink scooped up with tin cups the sweet and icy water of the stream.

At the end of the slab there was a curtain of putrefaction descending on it from an overhanging ledge of rock, about a foot above. This they cleared, and Binkie found to his satisfaction that the hidden end of the slab had been protected and that the edges of it were clear. Clean the slab—roughly three feet long, two feet wide and a foot high—from its bed of cement, and it was obvious that it could be lifted. The two men, filthy in body and face and hands, lay on their stomachs with torches examining the clean fissure, and, both knowing its significance, exchanged glances of mutual congratulation. Suddenly Jones darted forwards serpent-wise, and, one hand holding his torch close to the foot-high perpendicular wall of rock beneath the ledge, with the other pointed excitedly. He wriggled back, extracted from its sheath a great seaman's knife with which he had armed himself for the expedition, and darting forward began to scrape the surface. And in a minute there appeared before Binkie's eyes, the initials deeply hewn, as by hammer and nail, into the rock:

W. B.

What meaning the characters conveyed to the agraphic Jones, Binkie did not know. But Jones trembled like a man on the verge of tremendous discovery. As for Binkie himself, he slid on to his back and laughed like an idiot and wrung Jones's hand and poured into his deaf and uncomprehending ears the story of the mysterious William Bence whose clear map of the place he had found in Ancestor Jorico's books. He felt like a watcher of the skies when not a mere chance-viewed new planet swims into his ken, but when, like Kepler, he identifies one hitherto

hidden whose existence he has foretold and whose position he has found after the labours of a life-time.

"W. B.!" All doubt vanished. His toil had not been wasted. He had come unerringly to the exact spot—to the lid of the hole where the treasure was buried. He rose to his feet and with his hands instinctively swept his face and body clear of filthy sweat. Jones rose too. The ring of electric torches threw grotesque shadows of them on the nearer rocks around which the devil-birds, disturbed by their clanging with iron on stone, screamed restlessly while, in the great black distance, the myriad unblinking yellow eyes stared like those of uninterested gods.

Binkie pointed downwards with an air of triumph. Jones grinned excitedly, signing his perfect comprehension. Binkie said:

"For God's sake let's go down and have a drink."

Jones understood. They clambered down the two or three terraces to the stream level where they had left their kit. Each had a tot of brandy from Binkie's flask. They pledged each other. They sat side by side, one little lamp between them. Binkie pantomimed as best he could his grateful recognition of Jones's services in discovering the initials and his promise of unlimited reward on the finding of the treasure.

On the previous days of reconnaissance Binkie had scrupulously observed the flight of time by his wrist-watch. At twelve they would knock off work—the shooting and retrieving (difficult work) of diablotins, the futile gathering of stalactites and the preparatory clearing of the cemented slab—and would follow the stream to the cave's mouth and warm their chill bodies in the sunshine and

eat their meal and smoke, until the hands of the wrist-watch pointed to the hour of return. But today, Binkie, knowing that he must do navvy's work, had left his watch in the breast pocket of his silk shirt . . .

He drank his shot of brandy, hobnobbing with Jones, and forgetting all about Time and the Predestined Hour of Lunch, waved to Jones to follow him up the track.

This was certainty. They sweated for unconsidered hours. Spade and crowbar and pickaxe. At last the slab was cleared of its cement. They could lever it up to the foot height of the ledge overhanging the end. To shift it horizontally seemed beyond their strength and ingenuity. At last, under the levered-up end away from the ledge they put a great stone and so were able to peer down into the darkness. From their stock below they refilled dying lamps and craned their heads beneath the wedge-shaped aperture and dangled their arms down, each holding a pair of torches. And then Binkie gave a great cry.

"My God! Look!"

And at the same time Jones clutched his arm, and the hand that clutched it dropped the torch, which fell some five feet down on the lid of a wooden chest and pierced through it as though it had been made of paper, and disappeared, extinguished, with broken filaments, into the chest itself. It scarcely made the thud of a heavy cylinder of metal falling on wood. And by the chest lay something gleaming white, curled up and ghastly.

How long they worked to raise the slab another foot, by means of bigger and bigger bits of rock, they knew not. At last there was an opening at the further end away from the overhanging ledge through which a man might

slip with his whole body. Again they leaned over the now accessible hole, with their torches.

Binkie dropped down to the pit of ghastliness, shaking off Jones, who tried to restrain him. It was not even five foot deep. It spread away like the foot of a boot from the upright entrance to the heel. The whole space was about the size of a small bathroom floor.

Binkie turned his light on the pierced lid of the chest. The hole made by the falling torch was clear. On the lid he saw the faint remnants of burned symbols. He bent down. There was the rudest presentation of a man hanging from a gallows, and, just decipherable, the initials J. G. J. He kicked the chest with his foot, and it crumbled, empty, into futile dust.

The white gleaming thing by it was a human skeleton picked clean by ants.

Even in the horror of that moment Binkie, glancing up, noticed the leather reliquary and oval medallion of the Virgin hanging perpendicularly down from the strong chain around Jones's neck.

Jones hauled him out. He slithered a few feet down the slope and was very sick. The tainted fumes of corruption mounted through the aperture into the comparatively pure atmosphere of the cave. Jones dragged him away from it down the two terraces of rock to the stream and bathed his face. Jones also sluiced his own head in the water. One dying lamp guarded the kit on the further side. Jones refilled it and brought it across—a stride's width —together with Binkie's shirt and a sack which he put

across his shoulders and the brandy flask from which they each drank.

Binkie revived, sat up and began to talk to the stone-deaf and hollow-eyed Jones. But the man could see that the other was talking, and the substance of his speech was comprehensible. It was a message of despair and hopeless failure. The cache of the treasure had been unearthed; after how much labour of thought, Jones could not possibly know; but after how much physical toil he, of all men, could appreciate. And all they had found was the white skeleton of a man and the worm-eaten empty coffer that fell into dust.

Whose was the skeleton? Binkie knew with shuddering certainty. Jones didn't. For him the pictorial ghastliness of the discovery and the disappointment were enough. He took Binkie by the arm and signed that they should leave this Cave of Disillusion and warm themselves in God's sunshine.

But here Binkie's life's training as a man whose real business it is to act in sudden crisis asserted itself. He rose, took command again. They must cover up, as far as possible, the traces of their work. Tomorrow it might be too late, for God knew what condition their nerves would be in on a fresh entry into this horrible place of stench and darkness and jeering eyes of a myriad devils. It must be done now. . . . A chance tourist, or a curious hand in Mr. Henrico's employ, might come upon the open tomb any day, and the bones of the dead man and the worm-eaten fragments of the chest would become a newspaper sensation. Journalists would seek them out; one of the

party, with nerves out of control, might speak, and so betray the seekers of the Jorico Treasure to the civilized world.

The two weary, half-naked men clambered up again within the ring of torches and the fetid door of the open tomb. And again they worked, until they were drenched with sweat and until their muscles ached, to dislodge the great stones that held up slantingly the heavy slab. These eventually cleared by crowbar and pickaxe, the slab fell with a cloud of thick and blinding dust, and a clang that set the whole cavern a-screech and a-flutter.

It was all they could do. Into the head of what tourist, of what casual negro, would the idea come to lift up that slab and peer into the revolting secret which it hid?

They gathered their tools and their lamps, staggered down to the stream, got together their kit, and, in a state of every kind of slimy filth and in entire exhaustion, crawled back, through the last quarter of an hour's sunshine, to their quarters.

They stayed in bed for a couple of days. Mr. Henrico prescribed crude and drastic medicines.

"The cave is unhealthy. Who knows it better than we do? The air is putrid, unfit for a human being, black man or white, to breathe. That is why none of us ever dream of going in, except for a few yards in the entrance at dawn, now and then, in order to shoot a diablotin returning from his food among the palm trees. Ah no, Sir Gregory," he laughed, with a flash of white teeth across his honest old black face, "it's no place for folks. I remember my grandfather who was born before Emanci-

pation telling me as a little boy that the place was ha'nted. He had some story he had heard from his father of skeletons lying all about here and that their souls had got into the birds and that's why they're called diablotins."

He laughed, and waved the hand of the sophisticated negro who could afford to view with indulgence the crude superstitions of his forbears. But Binkie, lying on the bed of the student at the Royal Agricultural Institute, shivered. There might be more truth in the legend than the good Mr. Henrico suspected.

CHAPTER XIII

It was not until the evening of the day after our arrival that the explorers returned. Meanwhile nothing had been heard of them at the hotel. The only means of communication with them would have been a mule-mounted messenger. The hotel people had reassured an anxious Mrs. Dalrymple. Any distressful tidings would have been sent by such a messenger straight from Mr. Henrico. We found the boy Nicholas still with a lingering touch of malaria, and fretting at his enforced inactivity. Hospitable folk had asked them to spend a few days in the higher air of their estate in the country; but he had refused. How, he explained to his sister, could he wait for an instant beyond Binkie's return, which, good God! was being delayed beyond reason? So we met a very sallow-faced, hollow-eyed, gaunt young man who had no appetite for his food and no appreciation of our somewhat forced humorous conversation. I gathered that he had spent most of his days at the club, where he cursed the heat and the insects and the West Indies in general and Trinidad in particular, thereby making himself vastly unpopular, and drank many more cocktails and other iced alcoholic drinks than were good for him. He had also allowed his thin black hair to grow longer than my military mind regarded as tidy. A young man disorganized beyond my rough analysis of his state of being. Toby, I know, took him in hand and treated him roughly; whereupon Hettie Dalrymple

pleaded with Toby so that, in her presence, he felt that he had been a brute, and, out of it, a moment afterwards, realized that he had been an ass to listen to her.

He said to Jane and myself: "Damn it all, I've had to find some use for neurotic women, but I can't find any for neurotic men. If a man isn't a man, what the devil is he?"

"I do wish I could arrange a nice little war for you, my dear," said Jane Crowe. "You'd be so happy again."

Toby laughed and shrugged his broad shoulders.

"You know exactly what I mean. All the same, I wish to goodness this infernal Binkie would turn up."

Well, he did, the following late afternoon. Toby and Nicholas and I were taking the cool of the evening in the hotel lounge when Binkie and Jones drove up. We ran over to meet them. They had come by train from Arima and taken a cab from the station. It was full of their kit, among which were two great cocoa-sacks, bulging full and tied up at the necks with strong string, stiff with about a pound of red sealing-wax. Nicholas leaped forward.

"My God! Is that it?"

Binkie blighted him with a glance in his best quarter-deck manner, and Toby gripped him by the shoulder.

"Steady on, you fool!"

The hotel porters were already waiting to unload the cab. Binkie shook hands with us. Both he and Jones were looking ghastly; Binkie ten years older—the glitter had gone from his eyes, which were pale and dead, hopelessly fish-like.

"Wait," said he. "Let me get rid of all this."

He gave his orders: the personal belongings of himself and Jones to be put in their respective rooms; the sealed sacks to be dumped anywhere, so that they could be taken the next day aboard the yacht. He paid the driver.

Jones helped with the baggage. He had saluted us with the imperturbability of the old soldier.

"All well?" asked Toby.

"Let's go inside," said Binkie. "Jane's room."

He strode ahead. We followed wonderingly. Toby kept a grip on Nicholas.

"Steady on. We'll hear all about it in a minute."

We entered Jane's private sitting-room rather unceremoniously. She and Hettie were ready, the lights already switched on. Hettie rose with a little cry and ran to Binkie with arms outstretched.

"Oh, my dear——"

He received her in his arms and kissed her. Then they both looked round rather foolishly, having given themselves away for good and all to the assembled family. I think that, our minds set on the treasure, we regarded this pantomimic announcement of romantic affection as a matter of course. It was only afterwards that we referred to it. . . .

"Well, what have you brought us?" asked Jane.

Binkie's clean-shaven lips were set grimly.

"What I've told all Trinidad I'd bring back. Geological and ornithological specimens."

"But those sealed sacks?" cried Nicholas.

"Stones and dried birds."

"Is that true?"

"Yes. True."

"But the treasure?"

"Sorry, my lad," said Binkie. "There isn't any."

The boy reeled and staggered back, and his sister caught him in her arms and mothered him on a gay cane couch, while she stared at Binkie with desperate eyes. Toby grew almost white beneath his brown skin. I myself felt somewhat tottery, my heart going out to Binkie, who stood there a brave little man, hiding the agony in his soul.

"I'm sorry, everybody," said he in a firm voice. "I've done everything that was humanly possible. The hiding-place was practically the one I pointed out to Tom and Toby. I found the exact spot where the chest was hidden. I found the chest itself. It was empty. Whatever it had contained had been stolen. Jones and I have had a hell of a time. Toby, old man, ring a bell. I want a drink."

He sat down. Toby, after pressing the bell, came up to him and wrung his hand.

"It's awfully rough luck on you, Binkie, my dear old chap."

"Rough luck on me, yes. But what about the rest of you?" He threw out his hands. "I've led you on to all this promise of a Great Fortune. And I've disappointed you. You must loathe the sight of me."

Toby turned to us with a wide gesture.

"It's only Lady Jane, our dear hostess, who has lost anything. She has brought us out on a profitless journey, bless her heart. But for the rest of us, Hettie, Nicholas and myself, it's only a matter of 'as you were.' "

Nicholas, his young face drawn and haggard, tore himself from his sister's restraining arms and confronted Toby.

"It's all very well for you to say 'as you were.' But where was I? Where do I come in? Nowhere. I've been made a damned fool of."

Hettie stepped between her brother and the two indignant older men. In her pink and white comeliness, with her tearful blue eyes and despairing appeal, she looked to me like the most sweetly pathetic thing I've ever seen in woman.

"Don't, Toby. Forgive him, darling." She put her hands on Binkie's shoulders.

Binkie took her hands away very gently with an "All right, my dear," and faced the half-crazy youth.

"You couldn't have believed in the treasure with greater faith than I did. But I'm glad I didn't take you with me. You couldn't have stuck it. I tell you, I found where it was. I found the chest containing it, in a hole that hasn't been opened for a hundred years. I found—Jones with me—the chest, I tell you. I went down into the hole and I saw the initials 'J. G. J.'—John Gregory Jorico—our ancestor, on the top of it. And I kicked it, and it was so worm- and ant- and other insect-eaten that it crumbled into dust. But, lying by it was a white human skeleton, buried there for a hundred years. Where do you come in, my lad? You don't come in; in your present state of mind, you'd be a gibbering lunatic. Pull yourself together, and take things standing up like the rest of us."

The young man clawed his sallow face with his hands for a second or two.

"I'm sorry, sir. I didn't know. You must forgive me."

He sank again on the cane couch. There was a little interlude for drinks brought in by the coloured waiter.

"I think, my dear Binkie," said Jane, "we all need pull-

ing ourselves together." She had the air and voice of command, this weather-beaten, elderly lady. "We shipped on a search for Private Treasure. I must confess I didn't very much believe in it. It was the incentive to take you all on this cruise, which up to now has been delightful. There has been a touch of excitement in it. I thought—and so did Tom—that you might either find a box of treasure or a mare's nest. But you've come upon something—something —well, an empty chest and a human skeleton—so there. Can't be anything else to it but bloody murder and horror. And you yourself look as though you'd been sucked down into hell and spat out again. . . . So just tell us all about it, and we'll all listen, like civilized beings, with our nerves under control."

So Binkie told us, not all that I have already tried to set down, for details came from subsequent talk; but enough for us to appreciate the terrible history of the Treasure.

For, you see, any chance discovery of skeleton and mouldy chest would arouse even the most sluggish imagination; but for us no process of imagining was necessary. Up to a dreadful point the story, half told in Ancestor Jorico's note-books, wrote itself in the abominable cave. I say, up to a certain point. There had been a treasure of which both William Bence and Old Jorico had cognizance. The former had marked the hiding-place with his initials on the flat bit of perpendicular surface under the overhanging shelf. The latter had burned his initials on the chest itself. The treasure had been stolen, carted away in sacks, presumably, just as Binkie, a hundred years later, had schemed to cart it. Who stole it? Bence or Jorico? Whose was the skeleton?

Certainly not that of Ancestor Jorico, who died in the odour of a church-warden's sanctity in Bristol after many years of blameless living. Whose could it be, then, but that of the unfortunate William Bence? Now Binkie had unearthed a paragraph in a Port of Spain paper, reporting the disappearance of Captain Bence, Master of the barque *Polly*, who had gone on an expedition in the interior with a party of negroes.

If any of the negroes had returned with tales of the death or the slaying of the white man, there would surely have been some later reference in the newspaper. But not a soul returned. Was it stretching inference too far to accept as the story of the fate of the expedition the vague negro legend handed down from his slave ancestors of a hundred and twenty years ago to Henrico of the skeletons found at the approach of the Cave des Diablotins? Stretching inference too far to imagine Bence coming with his retinue of purchased slaves to retrieve the treasure which stress of pirate circumstance had compelled him to hide for a season in a spot inaccessible to all white mankind? Stretching it too far to surmise that, leaving his carriers outside, he had gone to his slab-covered cache, found the treasure stolen, and that there and then the tomb had closed on him for ever? Human hands must have closed the mouth of the boot-shaped cache. Human devilry must have slain the band of negro carriers.

The hand of John Gregory Jorico must have burned the rude effigy of the man hanging from the gallows and the initials J. G. J. on the lid of the chest.

To whom, then, did the treasure belong? To William Bence, who in the seaman's book belonging to him had

drawn the educated mariner's map of the island, and had signed his initials above; or to Ancestor Jorico, whose references were laborious and from a pictorial sense humoristically vulgar?

Whatever were the rights or wrongs of the matter, one set of facts stood out clear to all of us.

There was a treasure belonging either to William Bence or Ancestor Jorico; perhaps to both jointly. Ancestor Jorico had anticipated Bence in getting away with it. It was Bence's skeleton that lay by the empty and mouldering chest. Whether Jorico had organized this bloody murder and massacre, who were we moderns to say? At any rate, Ancestor Jorico, a hard-headed man of business, in spite of limited scholarship, had made his own rude cryptograms concerning the treasure, and had left in his incompleted will practically the exact sum of money which his cryptic calculations had declared. Then in 1830, when he died, the treasure must have been somewhere in serene existence.

We dined. I must say, perfunctorily. It is an imperative social law for reputable folk to dine. Besides, our hostess ordained it. There must be champagne to restore Binkie to health. But we were a haggard party. Of the whole lot of us, Toby was the only honest eater. Even Jane seemed too jumpy for conventional food.

"For God's sake," whispered Toby, who sat next her, "let us keep a sense of proportion."

We reassembled after dinner in Jane's sitting-room. It was a stifling night. The electric fans whizzed an ironical suggestion of cool air. Nicholas mopped his forehead, and sat half lifeless in a corner. Hettie lay wilting in a cane chair near Binkie. Jane, dried and hardened traveller—unmois-

tenable and unfreezable, as I once called her—her plain face expressive of nothing but hospitable courtesy, poured out coffee. Toby, big, brown, stolid, passed the cups and helped with the liqueurs.

Binkie swallowed a glassful of *crème de menthe*—why he loved that sweet, sticky, pepperminty horror of a liquid, I can't tell you. There was no accounting for Binkie's tastes. He is the only man I have ever known who ate whelks with relish and immunity, and preferred to have his turbot hung, like venison.

On reflection, it occurs to me that I may have given you a wrong impression of Binkie—that of the fussy little secretary of a County Charitable Association. Binkie was fussy, yes. But that was only because his was the mind that could see nothing except as an assemblage of detail. But once he had the assemblage right, he saw the thing very much in the rounds. He was peculiarly individual. He had a thousand qualities that could not endear him to his fellow-creatures. A fellow whose gastronomic ideal is a banquet of whelks, gamy turbot, and *crème de menthe*, puts himself beyond the pale of ordinary human sympathy. But to those who took the trouble to know him, behind the apparent futilities of the spare, crisp man of nervous movements there lay indomitable purpose and a sailor's kindliness.

But he had his fixed idea. Both Jane and myself were growing tired of it. He had played his big stake. He had lost. That, for us elderly folk, was the end of the matter. But it wasn't the end for Binkie.

He tossed off his *crème de menthe* and rose and faced us.

"You think I've brought you all on a wild-goose chase

and have deceived and disillusioned you. I have in one way. In another I haven't." His dry face was tense. "None of you can say I was wrong. I got to the heart of the thing. The treasure was there. It was taken away by old Jorico. It was in existence when he died in 1830. It's in existence still. And I swear to God I'll devote the rest of my life to finding it. I don't want any more help from you three"—to his cousins—"you've got your own affairs to look after. But I'll find it before I die. And it'll be share and share alike. That's all I can say at present."

He took up his cup and bolted his coffee. He turned to Jane Crowe.

"My dear Jane, if there's a tireder man on earth, I'd like to meet him." He turned to Hettie. "My dear——" She rose. "Just a word."

He bowed courteous leave-taking. Hettie followed him out of the room.

We all felt flat as though bereft of a vivid presence. Toby rose in his big, lazy way.

"I think I'll interview Jones and see what he has to tell me."

"I'll go down to the club," said Nicholas.

They took their leave. Jane and I were left alone.

"An hour of Rubicon Bézique?" Jane asked pleasantly.

During the remainder of our stay in Trinidad only odds and ends of things happened. Social engagements, pleasant enough in their way, must be kept. The *Nautilus* must be provisioned and otherwise prepared for the long homeward voyage. For homeward we must go. Even Binkie, who spent desperate and profitless days among the dusty files of

ancient newspapers in the Trinidad Public Library, took it for granted that we were reaching the abusive point of Lady Jane Crowe's hospitality. We had a week to clear up things.

Incidentally, I must say that I conceived a new admiration for Binkie. He strutted about, with his head up, just like an admiral who had lost a serious battle and was prepared to send to hell anyone who said that it was his fault.

After the emotional meeting on the evening of his arrival from the Diablotin Cave, Hettie and he announced to the family their engagement. But for the time being the knowledge must be confined to the family. They were in no mood for the congratulations of the Island. They were sensible folk. You can quite see that Jane's rank, Binkie's title and my own military standing, to say nothing of Jane's old personal friendship with His Excellency the Governor —and the Governor of a great Crown Colony, representative of the King, is, so please you, a devil of a fellow—made the whole lot of us, from the social, and, as we were all quite presentable and agreeable people—from not too snobbish a point of view—a fairly consequential crowd. Our comings and goings were reported in "The Port of Spain Gazette." Binkie had to give a long interview to their representative on the result of his discoveries in the Cave des Diablotins. He acquitted himself admirably, giving the paper a column of picturesque copy but reserving the result of his discovery for his communication to the Royal Society.

I only mention this by the way. For it is obvious that if the engagement of Commander Sir Gregory Binkley, Bart., C.B., C.V.O., R.N., to his cousin, Mrs. Dalrymple,

had been announced, we should have been engulfed in a whirlpool of social sensation.

We were all delighted. About tastes, especially those of man for woman and woman for man, however incomprehensible, there can be no disputation. Of course, as to the attractions of Hettie there could be none of the said disputing. As a younger man, without wife and family, why, damme, sir, I'd have married her myself, if she would have had me. She was a plump, pink, kind and highly intelligent dear. As I said to Binkie:

"I don't pity you a bit. You've found your Treasure. Above rubies, or whatever there was in the damn box."

And he was man enough to agree with me.

And then Hettie came with silly, shiny eyes. Wasn't his pluck wonderful in face of his crushing disappointment? Well, it was. I told her so. But I didn't tell her that Binkie was the sort of man who, in the most generous and kindly spirit in the world, would yet insist on a current inventory of her shoes, stockings, bust-bodices, cami-knickers, powder-puffs, lip-sticks, as a matter of statistical principle.

I wonder, even now, if I'm too hard on Binkie. He really has a heart of gold. And he is a man, beyond doubt. But there have been times when I should have liked to take him by the neck and throttle him and throw him into the sea.

Hettie, on the contrary, wanted to take him by the neck, her two soft arms encircling it, and draw him down into all the consolatory profundities of woman's love.

It's merely a question of point of view. I pride myself on a gift of reason. How could it be expected that, from the same point of view, a young and eager widow and a

sexagenarian Lieutenant-General with wife and family could regard a perfectly sound ex-Commander of the Royal Navy not much over forty, very comfortably off, and a baronet to boot?

"Bless you, my children," said I.

And that, as far as I was considered, was the end of the matter. But the matter, as far as this story is concerned, I think is of some importance, as you shall learn later; it is a matter of the oneness of man and wife.

Toby had many talks with Jones; apparently to no great purpose. Jones could only repeat in pantomime what Binkie had described very accurately and picturesquely in words. On their first talk, Toby took him by the shoulder and signified both congratulations on good work done and sympathy in its lack of result. He learned that Binkie had promised him a fair part in the treasure as the reward of his labours, and since there was no treasure, had given him a generous cheque. Jones had nothing but praise for Binkie, who had shared with him equally the physical fatigues of the search, and such creature comforts as they had been able to procure. Binkie was a gentleman.

Another talk was more significant. Jones had brought him his breakfast of coffee, rolls and fruit, tidied up the room and put out his things for the day, stropped his razor, announced the preparedness of his cold West Indian bath in the cool bathroom, when Toby, more or less at peace with the world, engaged him in conversation. Toby, pyjama-clad, sat up in his bed from which the mosquito curtains had been cleared, the branches of a tamarind tree swaying in a breeze visible through the screened windows;

and Jones, the perfect valet, stood at attention, in white clothes as spotless and uncreased as his master's.

There has been a lot of silly talk of old soldiers like myself belonging to the spit and polish brigade; but I don't think there's any officer of the old army—from subaltern to Field-Marshal—who'll not agree with me when I say that the private soldiers who always had their buttons clean and their accoutrements shining, and were never cursed on parade, were the pick of the regiment. Slackness in buttons connotes slackness in character—when buttons are the outward and visible sign of the disciplined and self-respecting man. . . . That's one of the reasons why I respected Jones. He had the old soldier's pride in smartness; when he was on duty, of course. Off duty, a man may loaf about in any old comfortable togs he likes. Toby, on duty, years ago, was as scrupulously dressed an officer as it was possible to meet; Toby off duty was just covered with loose clothing. On the other hand, Jones, in his hours of service, was still on duty and maintained himself as speckless as I am sure he maintained himself on parade.

Except to sound a patriotic note in praise of the old army, while hinting the formative influences of its discipline on Jones's character, all the above has, perhaps, little to do with the story.

Anyhow, on this particular morning, Toby, in their magic language, said:

"There's something I don't understand. Why were you so keen to go on this expedition?"

Jones half smiled, shrugged, and went through the motions of picking up handfuls of jewels from a box and let-

ting them drop. Adventure; he was still a young man; his disabilities cut him off from many joys of life; so Toby read from his gestures.

Now Toby, vastly interested in Jones and his uncanny intelligence, had been worrying himself over the man's original divination of the treasure-hunt. You will remember his seeing the scratched drawing of the little devil indicated in rude line drawing on a chest. By what processes of thought had he arrived at it? Previous talks with Jones had left the problem insoluble.

Toby, swinging his legs from the bed and taking up drawing-pad and pencil—their ultimate medium of communication—and bidding Jones sit on the cane chair by his side, once more went over the story of the opening of the tomb. Binkie had been graphic in his description. Toby drew his concept of the cache. Jones, who had the draughtsman's quality of rough line perspective, took away the block and sketched the place. The overhanging ledge, the flat panel, as it were below, the concave lid that covered the hole. Then Toby took the pencil and printed the initials "W.B." on the panel. That, from the point of view of Jones's interest, had been the detail in Binkie's narrative that had puzzled him. For it had been Jones who had first discerned the rough, time-covered letters.

"Why?" asked Toby.

The why and wherefore of ideas belong too pathetically to the subjective for expression otherwise than in articulate speech.

Toby turned to a clean page, and printed the initials in big letters; but Jones, regarding them blankly, shook his head. Except for the recognition that they were letters of

the alphabet they seemed to convey no meaning to Jones's mind.

I have told you that Jones's case was celebrated in the medical annals of the war. They had subjected him to every conceivable test. Alphabets had been spread before him. They had gone so far as to present him with the unmistakable picture of a dog, had placed beneath it the lettered square of a D and, with an interval, a square of a G, and had assembled the squares on which the vowels were printed. Invited to take part in an incomprehensible game, he had selected an I at random to fill the space. When they had substituted the O he was none the wiser.

So all the questionings that Toby put to Jones, from an alphabetical point of view, resulted in nothing.

At last Jones did, what seemed to Toby and to us all, when he told us, a very remarkable thing. He sketched the chest, with the gallows; made vague unrecognizable marks to represent the initials beneath it; drew his rough map of England, indicated the position of London, connected the gallows with the black splodge of London, and smiled at Toby.

And that was all Toby was able to get out of him.

CHAPTER XIV

Our departure was delayed some time beyond the date fixed for sailing, by the sudden collapse of Lady Jane. At the lunch-table she fainted suddenly after a few short gasps, and had to be carried to her room. Both Toby and I, who had seen strange things happen in our time, diagnosed a heart-attack. Dr. Chepstow, telephoned for, confirmed our opinion and administered temporary restoratives brought up on the chance of Toby's account being correct. He found on examination our dear lady's condition far from satisfactory. How long had this been going on? None of us could tell him. Ruth, questioned, declared that her ladyship had never shown any symptom of malaise since she had entered her service. She remembered the maid Elvira, whom she had interviewed when taking over her duties, saying something about her ladyship's "drops"; but as the latter had never mentioned them, or shown sign of needing them, she had let the bottle stay in the case of simple remedies. The doctor sent for the bottle, looked at it, and wagged a wise head. This sort of thing had happened before. Many times before. Just a chance that it hadn't happened since Ruth had been in attendance. Lady Jane must lie perfectly quiet and submit to treatment, which apparently she almost declined to do. She must sail tomorrow.

"She's her own mistress," said he, "and I can't prevent her. But, as a responsible medical man, I can forbid any of you accompanying her. I don't think she'll go off by

herself." He smiled. "When I think she's fit to take the voyage, I'll tell you."

"A long business?" I asked.

"It depends. One never can be sure. What bothers me is the reason for this attack. As far as I can make out she had been leading a very healthy and sensible life, ever since she left England. Unless, of course, there's some excitement at the back of it all, of which I know nothing." He looked shrewdly at Binkie and Nicholas, his late patients. "Neither of you two seem to be up to the mark yet." He turned on me—we were assembled in Jane's sitting-room—the five of us. "Has there been any exciting cause?"

It was a difficult question to answer. I caught an anxious glance from Binkie.

"We've all been undergoing a certain nervous strain," I said. "Particularly Sir Gregory and Egerton. But the rest of us have shared it. You know we're all relations. It's a purely family affair. But please don't imagine," I added hastily, "that there's any quarrel or dissension among us. That's important from your point of view. We're a singularly united crowd of people. It's an outside business affecting all of us that has been getting on our nerves. I can't tell you what it is—but there has been what you call an exciting cause."

"That's all I wanted to know," said the doctor. "Except perhaps this, if I might be so indiscreet as to ask: Is the excitement, or strain, or whatever it is, still going on?"

"No, thank God," cried Toby. "Everything's over and finished, wiped out. We heard some days ago."

"Thanks," said the doctor. "I'll look in this evening. I won't send up a nurse, as I've had a talk with Lady Jane's

maid, who strikes me as a most efficient young woman."

"You can take my word for it," said Toby.

By what authority Toby spoke, no one knew. Anyhow, Dr. Chepstow took his word and departed.

Well, there was nothing to be done but carry on as usual. We were dismayed, of course. We all thought that Jane Crowe was as hard as nails. The news that she had suffered for years from an unsound heart was a shock. It was almost as inconceivable as a diagnosis of life-long rickets in the world's champion heavy-weight boxer. Jane, who, as I had learned from the skipper of the *Nautilus,* had weathered storms which had played the devil with the stoutest of the crew. Jane, an invalid: it was incredible. But thus it was.

Later, Toby, going along to make inquiries, met Ruth just leaving Lady Jane's room. She closed the door behind her and put her finger to her lips.

"She's sleeping."

"Come in and tell me about it."

He held open the door of his room, which was next, for her to enter.

"What do you think?"

"If there was any danger the doctor would have sent in a nurse from the hospital. He has told me what to do and I can do it."

Toby nodded. "Aren't you glad now you didn't stay on board the yacht?"

She threw up her head and looked at him.

"Is that generous, Major Boyle?"

"No," said Toby. "I suppose it isn't, but it's common sense. You and I are direct people, and I think we get on best

together if we talk straight. Of course you're glad. You wouldn't be you if you weren't. Tell me—what about the other things—the things you mentioned?"

She flushed. "I'd like you to think they existed only in my imagination."

"Good," said Toby.

She moved to the open door.

"Anything else, sir?"

"When you see her ladyship, will you give her Major Boyle's love and best wishes?"

She hesitated on the threshold, looked up and down the corridor and then advanced a step or two into the room.

"For Heaven's sake, tell me, if you don't mind, if all the treasure-hunting is over."

Toby folded his arms and regarded her in considerable surprise.

"Treasure? What do you know about treasure?"

"Major Boyle," she said, with a shrug of her shoulders, and very calmly, "you've just said we could talk straight together. By saying 'What treasure?' you're not talking straight. I know."

"How? From her ladyship? Mrs. Dalrymple? . . .

"No. It's a family secret, and well-bred ladies don't tell their family secrets to servants."

Toby felt a shiver run down his spine. He cried hotly and perhaps idiotically:

"But, damn it, girl, you're not a servant."

"I'm Lady Jane's maid, just as I was Lady Duffield's," she replied with a laugh. "And I'm glad to have the post —thanks to you, Major Boyle. And if that isn't being a servant, I should like to know what is. As a matter of fact,

Jones told me," she continued in another tone. "He found out the secret for himself, and was taken on by Sir Gregory."

"I'll murder Jones," said Toby. "How many people has he told?"

"He has only told me. There's no one else to tell. Why should he? And if he wanted to, how could he do it? Who would understand him?"

"Why did he tell you?"

"Would you like to know?"

"Very much indeed."

"He thought that if he brought me jewels"—she made a startling copy of Jones's gesture of lifting up handfuls of precious stones and letting them drop through his fingers—"I might be persuaded to marry him."

"And now?"

"That's what I came back to ask you," said Ruth. "Did they find any treasure?"

"No."

"Do they expect to find it anywhere else?"

"Not that I know of. I hope not. Of course I can't tell what's in Sir Gregory's mind. You may as well know something accurate about it. Sir Gregory discovered that a great-great-grandfather of us four cousins had buried a great treasure in Trinidad—in the Cave des Diablotins. As we're his only surviving descendants, it belongs to us. Sir Gregory, with Jones to help him, found where the treasure had been hidden—but it had been taken many years ago by somebody else."

"And the skeleton? Oh, Jones has drawn me the skeleton."

"That's the ghastly part of it. All they found was an empty worm-eaten chest and a man's skeleton."

She shivered. "If it's still in existence——"

"It was in 1830."

"——it's not the sort of thing to bring anyone good luck."

"It must have cost a great many human lives," smiled Toby. "Lots of cold-blooded butchery went to it. I'm afraid our great-great-grandfather was a murdering beast of a fellow before he became a church-warden."

Ruth glanced instinctively up and down the corridor. All was still that sultry afternoon.

"Would you mind telling me one thing more, Major Boyle? Where does Jones come in on this? It puzzles me. He seems so keen."

Toby, remembering the emphatic dot by which Jones had located the treasure in London, was puzzled too; but he waved an explanatory hand.

"Sir Gregory offered him a small share. They were risking their lives working in that foul place. . . . Besides, the idea of buried treasure is fascinating, isn't it? Even those who don't benefit get excited. That, I believe, is the cause of her ladyship's attack."

"Thank you for telling me," said Ruth. "I hope I'll hear nothing more about it from Jones or anyone else."

She went out. A click of a door-handle told him that she had re-entered Lady Jane's room. He filled his tobacco-pouch—such had been his original errand—and joined me on the veranda of the hotel.

I saw from his clouded brow that there was something on his mind, and, after discreet questioning, he told me of

his recent interview with Ruth. After some discussion and confidences he said:

"I don't believe what she told me about the familiarity of the coloured servants. It's my idea she wanted to get away from Jones."

As I was sworn to secrecy I had to profess complete ignorance of the young woman's motives.

"I've made it my business to keep my eye on the men," said Toby. "They're perfectly respectful. They're born and bred in the tradition of their attitude to white women. They're honest fellows earning a good living, with an eye to the main chance, and they've got their own folk to look after, and they're not going to run the risk of losing their jobs. No. It's Jones that has been pestering the girl."

"Surely, my dear fellow," said I, "a girl of the qualities you attribute to Ruth is capable of looking after herself. If she doesn't want to marry Jones, she most certainly won't. On the other hand, fine women have been known to have immense pity. . . ."

Toby sprang up. "Oh, don't talk like that, General. The whole idea's damned unthinkable."

I lit a cigarette. "At my time of life, my friend, one looks at things with a quiet eye." He glared at me for a second. "You can damn my quiet eye if you like," I went on; "but I don't think it would be either kind or respectful."

Toby broke into a half-laugh. "Sorry, sir. I'm a bit upset by everything."

He shambled away into some sort of solitude, leaving me disturbed in mind. Toby had given himself away completely this time, as he had done previously in little bits. Whether he knew it or not, he was idiotically in love with

Ruth Tellifer. All kinds of barriers, most of them barb-wired, were between them. The English barrier between the master-caste and the servant-caste, barbed peculiarly by their respective relations to Lady Jane. The barrier which his disgusting profession, as he called it, had set up between him and woman as siren. The barrier which an honourable man, apart from any excursions into venal amours, sets up between undisciplined desire and its virtuous object. . . . I am no psychologist, but I think I know Toby. Every tentacle within him went out to claim the woman, Ruth. And he was half curious of all sorts of inhibitions. Man is a complicated sort of animal.

And there was every tentacle in his mysterious, afflicted man, Jones, doing exactly the same thing. Between master and man had arisen a ghastly jealousy.

That, in itself, was enough to worry an elderly gentleman who thought he had earned a few years' rest in a backwater of life. But there was also the inchoate picture of this confounded treasure with Jones skimming bat-like across it, and making his beastly dots over the map of England. And to entangle everything there was my dear Jane stricken down with heart-disease, and the voyage home indefinitely postponed. I may be forgiven if I longed for a magic carpet which would, in the twinkling of an eye, lower me comfortably into the bosom of my family, where, though I was entirely unrespected, I was really cherished like a pampered old pet dog.

In the course of a day or two Jane recovered, sat up, took as much nourishment as the doctor allowed her, and

sent for a lawyer, with whom she was closeted for some hours. After that she sent for me.

She was sitting up in bed, very spry and alert, and not undaintily clad.

"Tom, my dear," she said, "this is between us two. Honest? Yes? I've made a will, for the first time in my life. Of course I've thought I'd make one one of these days. But the day never seemed to come. Besides, the question of who should get my money after I was dead didn't interest me very much. The English Law's good enough for me, and it would do what was right. But now I've made my will, and it has been signed and witnessed and sent off by registered post to my lawyers in London . . . I've got a lot of money. How much, I don't know. I don't want to know. I pay people to know and conduct my affairs. All I've wanted is freedom from worry. As a female woman, from the sex point of view, I've had a beast of a time. You may think I haven't, but I have. I wanted a husband, children. I fell in love with Crowe—really in love. He turned me down badly. No need to go into it. But it jaundiced my soul. . . . Anyhow, I've kept my end up, haven't I?" She dismissed with a gesture whatever answer I might make, and went on: "What I wanted to tell you, in the strictest confidence, is this. I've made a will. You and Marion and your girls come in for something—twenty or thirty years hence, when I die. . . . But my main idea has been the fate of these treasure-hunting idiots. They're all dears, even Binkie, whom I respect more day by day, and they're all damn disappointed. So I've left each of them quite a lot. This, of course, is in strict confidence. It's no use telling them yet awhile. There are certain charities and other be-

quests. My nephew, Wintermere, as a human being has quite as much as is good for him. But as the holder of an old title—he's the 14th Earl—he's awfully hard up. So he has been looked after. Or at any rate, his boy; for I'm not going to die yet awhile. Anyhow, the thing's done and I've appointed you and Toby and Vincent Dunne, the head of my London firm of solicitors, as joint Trustees and Executors, and so God help you all. Now you know, and for God's sake don't worry me any more."

The next day she was up and about when Dr. Chepstow called.

"When can we sail? It's for you to ordain—me to obey. If you've ever met a meeker woman than me, you're a lucky doctor."

"You can sail on Friday," said Chepstow. "The sooner you can get home safely and put yourself in the hands of a specialist—I'm only a Colonial G.P.—the better."

She laughed. "The better for the specialist! All right."

On the afternoon before sailing Binkie, who had been absent all day, drove up to the hotel and took Toby and myself into his bedroom. He was looking so terribly fatigued that Toby rang for a reviving drink.

"I've had a beast of a tiring day," he said. "In fact I've had a beast of a time altogether, rendered none the less beastly by realizing the fact that I've brought you here on a wild-goose chase."

We told him not to worry on that account. We had all enjoyed a wonderful holiday. Quite worth the phantom fortune, said Toby.

"But it isn't phantom," cried Binkie, with a thump on

a pillow—he was sitting on the edge of his bed. "It's in England—or it was at the time of old Jorico's death. I've got on the track of it at last. It's this way. Ever since we drew blank at the Cave, I've gone on a different tack. I've given out that I had found wonderful material for my Royal Society Paper. Everybody believes it. But it struck me to take a side-line. I asked our good friend the Colonial Secretary, while I was on the spot why shouldn't I look up some island records of a filibustering ancestor of mine on my mother's side, who had a good deal to do with the Island, probably marrying a Trinidad girl, in the early years of the last century? Of course he said that the archives, registers, records or what not of the whole damn place were at my disposal. So since our return I've turned the Government Offices upside down, and it has cost me a small fortune to wash down the dust from my own throat and those of the various good fellows who have helped me. But I shouldn't have got anywhere if it hadn't been for this unfortunate delay over Jane's illness."

"But where have you got to, old chap?" asked Toby, ever impatient of Binkie's logical expositions.

"I've got to England, as I told you," said Binkie rebukingly. "Listen. I've found many references to him in the register of the arrivals and departures of ships. Also to Bence, Master of the barque *Polly*. But the only ones that really matter—I've got copies here"—he tapped his pocket —"contain the fact that the brig *Flora,* Master Captain John Gregory Jorico, arrived with general cargo—general, mind you—not slaves—otherwise there would have been the usual auction notice in the 'Gazette' and I should have spotted it—arrived, I say, in February, 1808, and sailed

with a cargo of sugar early in April. That was his last appearance in Trinidad. As we know, he definitely retired in 1810. Now don't those dates convey anything to you?"

Of course they did; we said so; but he went on:

"Jorico with his ship was in Trinidad—during the period that covered the disappearance of the William Bence expedition, recorded in the 'Gazette' of the 3rd April, 1808. To me the whole thing is obvious. Well, not the whole, but the essential"—the conscientious Binkie touch—"these two old villains were in partnership. They were in the same game. Remember, we were at war with France, and French privateers were all over the Caribbean waters; so that it was safer to hunt in couples. When they plundered, God knows. But they did. . . . Now let us say that Bence had charge of the treasure, which must be cached for a time, until the seas became safe again. Let us suppose that Bence arranged with Jorico a cache on the coast; that they had, indeed, hidden it together. There are apparently silly things in Jorico's cipher that have always puzzled me, which now seem to be getting clear. Let us suppose that Bence stole a march on him, and secretly removed the treasure to the inland cave, of which, somehow, he had heard; leaving Jorico to believe it was still on the coast. Let us suppose old man Jorico, going to pay a friendly visit to his partner in the barque *Polly* and finding him absent—ashore for a couple of weeks, he is told—thinks it queer. Let us suppose the most human thing in the world. Jorico, the skipper's partner, goes down to the cabin to get a glass of rum. While waiting for it he opens casually the only book perhaps in the stuffy hole—'Robertson's Elements of Navigation'—and finds the fa-

mous map you're familiar with. The map of the island with the north-east line indicating the Cave des Diablotins . . . Wait a minute," cried Binkie, "I'll prove something to you."

He produced the famous map from a portfolio of documents lying on his writing-table, and spread it out before us, pointing with his finger.

"Here. Up the Caroni River is a faint dot that has always bothered me. When rough people make marks on maps they invariably mean to note something. Now, I feel sure, that was the spot of the original cache—known to Jorico. Let us suppose that except for the north-east line terminating at the picture of the bird, it was the map agreed upon between them. Possibly Jorico had a copy. But let us suppose he realized he had been done down. What would he do? He'd make inquiries. He was a brainy fellow, old man Jorico. . . .

"Of course all this is sheer deduction from a perfectly sound hypothesis. I take it that Ancestor Jorico found his deductions on the spot—just as I've found mine a century later.

"Jorico makes inquiries. Learns the legend of the caves. Meanwhile Bence has to go south to get the treasure. Jorico organizes an expedition on his own account—doesn't tell anybody. . . . What happens then, who the hell can know? The evidence of my own eyes and the legend of the dead negroes show that there was bloody massacre and murder committed. Jorico got away with the treasure. And he wasn't such a damned old fool as to take it away in the original chest. He had the same brainy notion as I had—of taking it away in a sack. My notion was a cocoa-sack.

His was a sugar-sack. Don't you see? He sailed away with a cargo of *sugar—in sacks*. I take off my hat to Ancestor Jorico."

Binkie swigged off the remainder of the West Indian Julep—gin and coco-nut water—that had been brought him.

"He took that sack to England. He kept it there. And it's there still. Somewhere in Bristol."

"Jones has an idea it's in London," said Toby.

Binkie started. "What the devil does he know about it?"

"That's more than I can tell you," said Toby.

"Surely," I intervened, "a man wouldn't keep half a million of money lying idle for two and twenty years?"

Binkie countered: "Why not? The old man had all kinds of other savings—enough to let him live comfortably for the rest of his days. He may have been frightened at the risk of disposing of jewels—putting off the experiment from day to day, as we all put off things. Then he had two sons growing up. Can't you imagine an elderly man cuddling himself with joy at the prospect of leaving his sons an unsuspected fortune when he died? There's lots of human nature in man, especially in converted pirates."

The psychology seemed sound. Besides, there is no eccentricity of conduct conceivable by the human brain that has not at some time or the other characterized some human being.

"When we get back," said Binkie, "I'm going to rake Bristol with a fine-tooth comb."

That was the end of that palaver.

"Amusing prospect for Hettie," said Toby to me a bit later.

"My dear boy," said I, "the perfect wife—as Hettie will be—is keen on any hobby of her husband's, even though it be raking hell for icicles."

The next day we sailed.

CHAPTER XV

ALTHOUGH we all tried to be cheery, it was a disgruntled lot, with the exception perhaps of the Captain, the ship's company and myself, all wanting to get home again, that sailed in *Nautilus* from Trinidad. Even my spirits were none too exuberant. For one thing Jane's sudden illness had made me anxious. From a serious conversation with Dr. Chepstow, I gathered that he had regarded the attack more seriously than Jane would admit to her guests. She must quit the tropics at the earliest moment. She ought never to have come. No sane medical adviser, G.P. or specialist would have allowed her to. He had asked her who attended her. She had laughed in his face. He was the first doctor she had seen for ten years. The last one she had called in had prescribed the drops which Elvira, the maid, had compounded to Ruth. A most obstinate woman, said Chepstow. Yet he had scared her. Scared her to the point of making her will. A scared Jane Crowe was a subject for anxious solicitude. Chepstow himself was scared. He bundled her off to a London specialist. Millionaire patients don't fall in the way of a Colonial G.P. every day in the week. Things were very serious.

Then, of course, as depressed units, there were the four cousins. If they hadn't been disappointed at the vanishing into thin air of their dreams of wealth and the fairy-tale lives they might lead with it, they wouldn't have been human. For all Binkie's bravery and indomitable purpose,

the iron of defeat had entered into his soul. Hettie shared his dismay, on her own account as well as on his; but she was the best off of the lot of them, inasmuch as she could devote her mind to providing anodynes or balsams or whatever is the remedy for souls jabbed through with iron spikes. Toby glowered at the prospect of hateful years as the mandressmaker, "Palmyre." Nicholas regarded life as a grey welter of despair. And Jones, once so spry and smiling, went through his duties, laying out my evening things, for instance, with the punctilio of a highly trained undertaker preparing to lay out a corpse.

Jane herself, suffering reaction from nervous strain, manifested a hitherto hidden querulousness. She forbade Binkie, at table, in good set terms, to talk any more about the damned treasure. She rated Nicholas for unpunctuality at meals, when the boy, in the wireless cabin, was engaged in receiving a message of farewell from the Governor of Trinidad.

Also, after the first day out, I seemed to notice a drop, as it were, in the spiritual barometer of the crew. Questioned, the Captain said he thought we were in for dirty weather. I suggested that we could not expect to sail on a cerulean mill-pond every time and all the time. He talked to me about knots; how many she could do in fine weather and how many in foul; a question of length of voyage to say nothing of discomfort. I perceived that he, like myself, was eager to get back to his wife and family. Wives and families never realize how eager are the errant heads of households to get back to them. I felt strongly drawn towards Captain Culliver. I could imagine him longing for the evening slippers warming by the fireside. Who warms

slippers for the skippers afloat on even the most luxurious yachts? I also read in his eye the uncomfortable antithesis of sea-boots.

Indeed, the sky grew cloudy, the sea choppy. There was nothing to make a fuss about, but, accustomed as we were to life on the ocean wavelet, we regarded ordinary ocean waves with a sense of personal injury. We had some rain, and sat indoors in the deck-house suite of drawing-room and smoking-room, smoking, reading, playing cards. Hettie, not a good sailor, was the first to retire to her cabin. Nicholas, morose, spent most of the time in his den on the bridge, with the earphones on his head, listening for messages and dreaming of the wireless inventions on which his young hopes were centered. When he came down from his eyrie, which was as seldom as possible, he entertained us (with no intention, however, of contributing to our entertainment) with picked up scraps of world news.

Jane continued snappy, even with me.

"Why the blazes didn't you play your ace instead of the queen? Couldn't you see that the king was the only spade he had in his hand? You've lost us the game by your slackness, and we ought to have been four up."

Only to Toby was she invariably kind.

For instance, this happened.

It was on the third day out. A beast of a day. Sky dull, sea rough. Yacht pitching in a way disconcerting even to my dried-up inner man. The three of us, Binkie and Toby and myself, were lying on the settees that ran round the smoking-room. I felt far from well. Binkie was explaining that, his sea-life having been spent on battleships, he could stand any kind of roll, but that pitching was more or less

new to him. He wasn't used to going to sea on a beastly cork. Thank God, he had escaped destroyers.

"Thank God you've got something to thank God for," said Toby.

Ruth appeared at the threshold, undisturbed and imperturbable, the wind in her thin garments. Her ladyship's compliments to Major Boyle and would he mind going down to her for a few minutes. Toby sprang up and followed her.

"This worry you at all?" he asked casually.

"Not a bit. Why should it?"

"There's such a thing as being seasick."

"I suppose there is," said Ruth. "But I'm not."

"Splendid," said Toby, cheerily.

He found Jane in the little boudoir of her private suite, writing unconcerned at her desk. She turned in her swivel-chair and smiled as he entered.

"It'll be nervy weather for a day or two until people find their sea-legs. Poor Hettie's prostrate. I don't think Binkie is over comfortable. I'm an old sea-dog and weather doesn't worry me. How about you?"

"Quite fit," said Toby.

"You can smoke your pipe if you like."

"Thanks," said Toby, pulling out his pouch.

She laughed. "No, please don't. It was only to make sure about you. You don't mind?"

It was Toby's turn to laugh. "Oh course not, my dear."

She rose and moved across the pitching deck with sailor-like sureness, to the chintz-covered settee at the side of the room. "Come and sit down and have a little talk all by ourselves."

Toby obeyed gladly. In his eyes Jane was a great woman. They had grown to be friends, perhaps a little bit more. A pretty affection united them. He patted her hand.

"You sent for me. What's it all about?"

"Chiefly about you, Toby dear."

"Me?"

"Yes. Your fortune. You can't say that the prospect of hanging silk rags on scraggy women for the rest of time is particularly thrilling."

"One of these days plumpness will come again into fashion and there'll be a change."

"I'm talking seriously, Toby," said Jane. "Why don't you get out of it?"

Toby shrugged. How could he? Every penny he possessed was in "Palmyre." He couldn't sell it for what it was worth because it was such a personal thing. He himself was "Palmyre." As well expect a painter to get money for the good-will of his studio. Already orders were beginning to slacken. Women were waiting for him to come back. He was caught up in the merciless cogs of a machine. The dissolution of "Palmyre" would involve in ruin not only himself, but the regiment of women whom he employed.

"I am perfectly willing," said Jane, "to buy you out, lock, stock and barrel, from 'Palmyre' at a price that would satisfy everybody and put in an artistic genius of my own finding and run it at a profit to myself. Don't you see?" She looked into his brown, rather sadly smiling eyes. "You would then be in possession of a certain capital that would enable you to start on any scheme of life you chose—and of course, if it was a good, sound business scheme, my dear, I'd be only too happy to come in with you."

Toby shook his head. "It can't be done."

"Why?"

"It's bad enough to make one's living out of women's vanity—after all, it's business and it's honest hard work. But to take advantage of a woman's generosity—no. That, as I say, can't be done."

She gripped his hand impulsively. He was dismayed to see tears glistening in her eyes. In another instant they fell; two drops running down her face. He took both her hands, drew closer to her and kissed them.

"Oh, my dear, don't," said he. "Why should you worry about me?"

She drew away from him, both hands clasped in his, and her face was irradiated by the saddest, sweetest smile that ever made a plain woman beautiful. The gay chintz-hung little boudoir bobbed and heaved, and the woodwork creaked and nothing could be seen through the port-holes but the rain and wave-soaked canvas that screened the passage-way on each side. And neither Toby nor Jane swaying about on the settee was conscious of the sea. It was a transfigured Jane that appeared before Toby's eyes.

"Why?" she said. "Just because you're the only man I've ever cared about—except for a few forgotten dreadful weeks—in all my life." The pressure of her strong fingers grew stronger. "I'd give anything, do anything in the world to make you happy."

Toby could do nothing but bow his head and kiss her hand. She freed one of them and passed it lightly over his hair.

"You see, my dear, money is power. I've such a lot and I've never done anything with it. An enormous waste of

energy. . . . The things for the good of the world that could have been done with it, and haven't been done"—her hand still touched his hair—"and in human beings there's a store of wasted energy—decent human beings, like myself. And like you, Toby. Don't you think, dear, that if really big people, you and I, for example, got together, we might grapple with things and do something really big in life before we die—expend all the energy at our command—and so justify our existence?"

"My dear," said Toby.

She pressed his head down gently. "Let me finish—for one doesn't say this sort of thing twice. Listen, Toby. I've been a starved woman. I've been kind, in a way, because it offends me somehow to be cruel. I've given to all sorts of charities, because that's the ordinary duty of a wealthy woman. But I haven't really cared a hang about any of them. Just as I've not cared about any human being, till now. And I'm quite young yet—I know I look older than my age, but I'm not. . . . You and I are such great pals that—well . . . you see, don't you?"

Toby raised his head and met her clear blue eyes shining with the smile that lit up her lined face. Indeed she did look surprisingly young and yet unutterably sad. He was deeply touched and vastly troubled, for this revelation had come upon him unprepared. He put an arm around her. Could man who held a woman in deep affection do less? She surrendered with a little sigh and laid her head on his shoulder.

"I've said silly things, Toby," she whispered. "But unless you like, don't say anything about them. It's only that I'm so tired—so tired. Don't say anything. Just let us stay here for a few moments. I'll be all right soon. Hold me a little

tighter, dear. Your arm is so strong and helpful. . . . I love you, Toby. You'll never hear me say it again if you don't want to. . . . Everything hurts so. . . ."

He put his other arm around her and cherished her and kissed her hair and her forehead. She sighed again faintly:

"I'm so happy."

He sat with her for some minutes until at last he became aware that she was either asleep or in a faint. He released her and laid her down in the gay chintz settee. A bell summoned Ruth from her little cabin in the private suite.

"She had an attack like this yesterday. She insisted I shouldn't tell anybody."

Together they carried her carefully into the adjoining cabin and laid her on the bed. Ruth took a phial from a medicine cupboard.

"I know what to do," she said, with a slightly authoritative gesture of dismissal.

Women were women. Women had to be undressed and reclothed. No place for a man. Toby retired reluctantly. He unhooked his Burberry from the stand at the foot of the companion-way and went up, bare-headed, in the rain, to the bridge. Through the port-hole of the wireless cabin he saw young Nicholas with the earphones on, sitting at his table before an open book and a block of paper on which he was engaged in some kind of calculations. The ruddy-faced captain in oilskins was occupied with the man at the little wheel in front of the binnacle, which controlled the ship's course. It rained pitilessly. There was gusty wind; and the sea was nasty and choppy and of a dull, dirty grey. The skipper nodded to Toby, and Toby, nodding to the skipper, went a bit aft and hung on to the rail. In the lee of the

chart-house he lit his pipe and emerged again into the tepid welter of universal wetness. And there he remained, until the tropical darkness fell, a greatly puzzled and pitying gentleman.

Lady Jane Crowe was a big woman, also apart from sex, a big human being; counting sex, he had seen her, as no one else in the world, except perhaps one fool now comfortably dead, had ever seen her, as a woman with all that matters in a man's eyes of beautiful surrender. The appeal from the depths of her starved womanhood had endowed her otherwise plain, weather-beaten and carelessly treated face with a strange spiritual beauty. She had offered him not only the disciplined greatness of herself, but the potentialities of any greatness towards which vast riches would enable him to strive. . . .

Her words had been so crisp, so true, so pregnant with the deep significance of their possibly united lives. That waste of world-energy—the threefold energy of the two of them and the power of wealth that lay behind her. The things that this Triune Energy might accomplish in a flaccid post-war world!

And it was all so impossible. So tragically, hideously impossible.

"Oh, damn!" cried Toby aloud. His pipe, the most faithless and unsatisfactory companion of man, refused to draw, being choked up or wet through or disgruntled after the manner of the beastly things. He dashed it on the streaming deck in a fit of temper and, leaving the skipper to marvel at his maniacal act, descended the short companion-way to the deck, where, in the smoking-room, Binkie and myself had been more or less uncomfortably getting

through the comfortless afternoon. He put his head in the door on the lee side.

"Jane's had another bad attack. I'm going down to see how she is."

That was the first thing we had heard about it. Binkie and I sat up. We had been dozing over novels.

"Good Lord," said Binkie, "at lunch she was as right as rain."

"I'll be jolly glad when we get home," said I. "Damn glad."

You will see that, by this time, I had become insensibly absorbed in the general pessimistic atmosphere of the ship.

"I wish to God," said I, "she had done what I begged her to do—give any kind of Trinidad medical man a passage home and a fee—money doesn't matter to her. It was Chepstow's original suggestion. He had a young assistant who would have leaped at the job. She wouldn't hear of it. Said there was no accommodation on board for a doctor. The young man, for a free passage home and back and a fee of fifty guineas would have dossed, in the greatest delight, anywhere. But no. Jane had never carried a doctor on board and, as long as she lived, never would. If the skipper got a cold or the first officer got a carbuncle or a stoker got a scalded hand, or a steward got measles, she was perfectly able to deal with the case. The carbuncle, for instance, on the voyage out. You remember? Her boudoir transformed into an operating theatre. Sterilized everything. Lancet. Cotton wool. . . . You remember? Joy of first officer. . . . Any old trouble for other people, but for herself—no."

She had turned me down flat before we sailed.

"I'm not going to have any doctor, old or young, about

my ship, who'll suggest every morning: 'Your tongue's all right and your pulse is all right. But it'll give me a kick in life if complications set in before dinner-time. So here's hoping!' No, I'm not taking any doctors."

And now she had another of the attacks, with no help at hand save that which Ruth, guided by Chepstow's general directions, was able to render. Binkie rose and said foolishly:

"You can't suggest anything we might do?"

The only suggestion I could make was that we might follow Toby's example and go and make inquiries. We descended, and got as far as the foot of the companion-way, when we saw Toby coming towards us with an agonized pale face, holding out checking hands.

He told us. Jane was dead. She had passed away peacefully a few moments ago, in what Ruth had taken to be sleep.

"My God! Impossible," cried Binkie incredulously.

"I know Death when I see it," said Toby.

We went along the swaying deck between the lower deck-house of saloon and owner's suite and the buffeted wet canvas along the side, and reached Jane's boudoir. Ruth stood in the frame of the door obviously awaiting us. She switched on the light for it was dark. While looking at Toby, her eyes filled with tears, she said:

"I think Sir Thomas and Sir Gregory ought to come in. . . ."

"And Captain Culliver must be called at once," said Binkie.

"I was on my way to him when I met you," said Toby.

We entered, heart-broken, and looked down on her who,

so short a time before, was a very valiant lady. She seemed to have died happily, for there was a serenity in her features set in a strange and almost smiling youthfulness. It was as though something had happened to give her joy, either in life or death.

We waited until Captain Culliver, his round red face wet with spray, came in and stood with us. He was the only one, by virtue of his position, who could make official record of the death. That the dear lady was dead, there was no doubt. He, like Toby, had seen much of it, having spent war-years in a mine-sweeper.

When we re-entered the boudoir, he broke down and cried like a child. He had sailed with her for nine years, and loved her, as we all loved her.

Then came Hettie Dalrymple, forgetful of the sea, clad in silk wrap over night things, stricken with horror and dismay, and young Nicholas and Toby who had broken the news to brother and sister. Ruth appeared again at the cabin door. Hettie said:

"Can I be of any help?"

"If you like, madam," said Ruth in her quiet, authoritative way, "but I know exactly what to do."

"I'll come, anyhow," said Hettie, and followed Ruth into the cabin.

We talked brokenly for a short while, conscious that our place was not in the sacredness of that gay little boudoir. Captain Culliver went up to his duties. We straggled out after him.

Five minutes afterwards, when the news had spread, there was no more desolate ship on the Seven Seas.

There is no need to dwell much longer on the tragedy.

We all, including many of the crew who had been for years in her service, saw the great and dear lady when she was set out in the decency of her last garments. . . . There was no question of putting into any port, as we were four days out.

The engines were stopped. The ship rocked in the sullen waves. A Union Jack covered the weighted hammock. Culliver read the funeral service, in the presence of the whole ship's company, and we committed her body to the deep.

CHAPTER XVI

Captain Culliver called us to a miserable council in the drawing-room. His business was to navigate the ship and answer for the discipline of the crew. With the material or domestic comfort of the passengers he could have no concern. For instance, unless they offended against the laws of England, stole, fought, murdered, preached mutiny to the crew, and so forth, when he could put them in irons, he had no authority over the chef or the chief-steward. That sort of thing was the owner's affair. Also there was the question of sailing-orders. Her ladyship's had been—straight to Southampton. Now that her ladyship was no longer with us, suppose, for instance, the family found it essential, in consequence of her death, to put into another port, he wouldn't feel justified in taking them on to Southampton against their will and perhaps against the interest of Lady Jane's estate. He was all the more concerned because we were not an assemblage of stray guests, but her ladyship's own family.

"It may also help you, Captain Culliver," said I, "to know that Lady Jane made a will before leaving Trinidad, and appointed Major Boyle and myself joint executors."

"That certainly clears the ground," said he. "If you two gentlemen consent to represent the others in an official capacity, I can enter it on the log, and everything will be in order."

"We'll discuss the matter, Captain, and let you know," said I.

The discussion was short. I proposed that, as executors, Toby and I should nominate Binkie as owner's representative. Not only was he the one seaman among us, but the leader of the expedition that was the reason of our voyage. Toby seconded me. But Binkie, after thanking us for our courtesy, declined point-blank. Jane had chosen Toby and myself as her executors and it was for us to administer her estate. To illustrate, by the most trivial of things, the principle involved, we must realize that every bottle of beer and tin of food on the ship was part of the estate for which we were responsible. I asked him what would be happening if we weren't executors, or didn't know of our appointment?

"Before an actual situation," said he, "it's futile to discuss a hypothetical one."

No. Binkie retired from proxy-ownership. Whether he was hurt in not being included in the administration of the estate, I didn't know, nor do I know now. His attitude was courteously logical. Hettie, a very much washed-out young woman—I think she was the worst sailor the *Nautilus* had ever carried—of course agreed with him. Toby and I must represent Jane. Nicholas said that it was obvious. I suppose for them, it was.

"Two people can't run a ship," said Toby, with a laugh. "So it's up to you, sir."

"Very well," said I. "In that case, I delegate all my authority to Toby—if that meets with your approval."

Thus was Toby elected owner's representative on board.

A little discovery a while later strengthened his position. We had to perform the melancholy duty of straightening out Jane's papers. The first one we came across was a note

to Toby just begun. The rest were concerning business affairs, with which lawyers and such folk had to deal long afterwards, and which have nothing to do with my narrative. Obviously she had begun to write to Toby, had changed her mind and summoned him, and had the note in front of her when he came in for their last interview. Except for the final poignant sentence, it was merely confirmatory of her statement to me with regard to the executorship.

"My dear Toby,

"I've made my will in Trinidad and appointed Tom and yourself and my old friend and lawyer Vincent Dunne my Trustees and Executors. I hope you'll accept. To tell you the truth, I'm rather dreading this voyage, as my heart is so rocky. . . ."

We took the scrap up to Captain Culliver, to keep with the ship's papers, as a formal record of Toby's authority.

The good man was greatly affected. "I begged and prayed her to go home via New York in a big liner where she'd be comfortable and have proper medical treatment. But she wouldn't listen to me. You know what she was, Sir Thomas. I've had some sea experience, and I smelt this dirty voyage. The yacht's as seaworthy as the *Aquitania,* if you see what I mean; but I'd be a liar if I said she's as comfortable in a gale of wind. I pointed that out too, to her ladyship. But no . . . 'You and the crew'll have to take her back to Southampton, won't you?' 'Yes,' said I; 'but we're all tough sailor-men. After four years' mine-sweeping in the North Sea, life aboard the yacht in a typhoon would be pampered luxury.' She said: 'If you dare to think I'm not as tough a sailor as you, you can find another ship.' 'And the passengers, my lady?' I asked. 'Do 'em good,' she said. 'Take

their minds off visions and set 'em on to realities.' Those were her very words, gentlemen. 'What do you call realities, my lady?' I asked. 'Being seasick?' She laughed. 'Just obey orders, Captain,' she said. So what was a man to do?"

That night, I remember, we ran through a storm. Binkie frankly declared himself incapable of facing dinner. Only Toby and Nicholas and myself sat down to the meal, served, with some difficulty, by the imperturbable, white-clad, efficient Jones. The stewards, apparently, were sick unto death. Concentration on fugitive food precludes polite dinner talk. I noticed through the serving-hatch the gleam of something feminine, and I recognized that it was Ruth.

She came in at the end of dinner, and, swinging a bunch of keys, opened the cabinet where Jane kept the old brandy and liqueurs and cigars. None of us being in humour for such things, Toby bade her re-lock the cabinet. When she had gone I questioned Toby, more by a look, I think, than by words.

"Peters—the head-steward—is a fat fool. I've no use for him. Seems he buttled for decaying noble families until he got a job with Sir Gorgeous Midas—that's du Maurier, not me—on his sixty-million-ton yacht *Pactolus,* and spent two years lying up in the harbours of Cannes and Monte Carlo. Jane took him on as a sailor. Damn fellow says he isn't used to this sort of thing. Swears he has hæmorrhage of the liver and refuses to get out of his bunk. So I've sacked him. Says he'll have the law of me when we get to Southampton. He jolly well can. He's going to stay in that bunk and be treated like a tender invalid, no matter how well he feels in a day or two, until we reach port."

"But the poor chap," said I, "may really be seasick."

"He isn't. Hasn't been. I've made it my business to find out. I'm assuming that the swine's really ill and I'm going to make it absolutely certain that we knew he was ill and did our best to cure him with calomel and beef-tea and quinine and castor-oil and rest, although the sun may be shining like blazes on the sort of sea we came out on. . . . I'll teach him to sham illness! My God! . . . I once had a Sergeant-Major . . . He was appointed by some ass before I took over. He was perishing with rheumatism. . . . Well, that's another story. One of the few funny stories in the world. Anyhow, he was a blighter and I cured him. And I'm going to cure Peters. Meanwhile, I've appointed Ruth head-steward, with head-steward's salary, and that's why she has the keys."

Which was all very lucid and quite in the manner of the Toby I knew in the war.

Those were practically all the words spoken during our pitch-and-toss kind of meal. Nicholas rose first, pallid, long-haired, respectful, begging permission to retire. He always called me "sir." He must go up to his duties in the wireless cabin. Ever since we left Trinidad the boy seemed to be possessed of a morbid conscientiousness. He spent his days in the little room. At any rate he had an interest in life.

If it came to that, so had Binkie, who had started decoding and tabulating the Jorico cryptograms all over again. Perhaps only on my hands did time hang heavy; and on my spirits the prospect of a long tedious voyage hung heavier. In fine weather the yacht averaged her eleven knots; in bad weather, seven was as much as she could do. The young mate informed me that we were going to get it in the neck the whole way. That would mean crawling along at the

rate of about six or seven miles an hour—a professional pedestrian could walk as fast—and Heaven knew when we should come to the journey's end. Besides being bored to death, having nothing to do and having read nearly every book in the ship, I suffered much inconvenience from the incessant storms, and envied the parasitic animals whose habitat might have been a rocketing pheasant or a buck-jumping mule. But, as I have told you, I have never pretended to be a seafaring man. I could only thank God for a stout stomach. After all, that was something to be thankful for.

Yet the discomfort, the staggering from one spot to another, not trusting to one's feet (in my own case) but having to use one's hands, monkey fashion, the perpetual banging of one's elderly body against something, the barking of one's shins until one was a roll of lint bandages, got on my nerves. And then there was the unchanging, sullen sky and the grey-green welter of waves, each wave fringed with dirty white foam like ferocious and merciless teeth.

I didn't complain. Oh, dear, no. I'm an old campaigner, and my life's experience has taught me to take the rough with the smooth. But for amenity of life, give me the smooth all the time!

Toby, like Binkie and Nicholas, had found a job; but, unlike those two, faced it with a merry countenance. Once in a position of responsibility, he was one of those people who made work for themselves. Ruth seemed to be of the same type. During the war, more particularly during two tedious spells of convalescence after wounds, when he had set his mind on it, Toby had learned a little rough surgery. He was ever a delicate man with his hands. Now, a ship

can't be kicked about like a football without somebody being hurt. The captain reported odds and ends of accidents among the crew. There was one man with an arm cruelly scalded by steam. Another had pitched down the steep iron stairway to the engine-room and hurt his head. And so on . . .

It was but natural that Toby should call Ruth into consultation and appoint her nurse in charge of the injured. It was she who, under his supervision, treated my very badly barked shins. When Toby went out of my cabin, leaving her to do the bandaging, I said:

"It seems a terrible fuss about nothing."

"If those sore places became septic," she replied, "there'd be more fuss than we care to face."

"Who are 'we'?" I asked.

She looked up calmly, the end of a roll of bandage in her hand.

"Major Boyle and I, Sir Thomas."

I said nothing; good manners forbade. Perhaps even my question had been a breach of good taste. But I had been interested in the tranquil assurance of the joint responsibility. Her fingers were deft. I asked lamely, when she fastened the thing with a safety-pin:

"Where did you get your professional touch from?"

She laughed, sitting back on her heels.

"If a woman doesn't know how to roll a bandage, she can't be of very much use in the world."

"I tender you," said I, with a mock bow, for Ruth was sitting there very goodly and wholesome and kind to look upon, "my humblest apologies and my most grateful thanks."

She rose, smiling and evidently pleased by my little gallantry. We seemed to have met on equal social terms.

Thus, what with hospital cases fore and aft, and commissariat, Toby and Ruth saw a great deal of each other. The commissariat question became complicated by the literal knocking out of the chef, who was put to bed with a sprained knee. His assistant, a callow youth, was, to use a term of perhaps unnecessary elegance, a fine-weather assistant. Toby and Ruth, with the aid of the ship's cook from the forecastle galley, prepared most of the meals.

They seemed to be together most of the day. Captain Culliver, anxious about his injured and incapacitated men, regarded them as inseparable entities. They were both big, capable, responsible. His own work was cut out for him, as much as one man could cope with. The recent storm had done a certain amount of damage to a propeller. He was a worried man. These two combined in them his conception of the perfect owner, ever ready with sympathetic understanding of his technical troubles, and with helpful suggestion in matters that might possibly be delegated to a lay executive.

Toby, as owner, had the freedom of the bridge. Given or taken, it was somehow assumed by Ruth. The rest of us were passengers. As a matter of fact, conditions were so unutterably filthy that we didn't care what we were. Hettie lay helpless in her cabin, and Ruth tended her as though she had no other occupation. Binkie and I frankly confessed that we each felt like Prometheus, wishing by day that it were night, and by night longing for it to be day. And every morning Ruth came and, swinging and

bobbing in rhythm with the horrible ship, attended to my barked shins.

A man was swept overboard during the night. We didn't know it till the morning. The ship's moral depression was almost a concrete thing.

Toby came to Binkie and myself with news:

"Two deaths! The lot of them have got the wind up! If we weren't in mid-Atlantic they'd mutiny and insist on running into the nearest port."

It was then that the skipper took Binkie into consultation. Hitherto, as I have told you, Binkie had scrupulously observed naval etiquette. Had he been an Admiral of the Fleet, he would none the less have been a passenger under the supreme command of Captain Culliver. But when Culliver, somewhat over-driven, approached Binkie professionally, the latter responded with all his heart. So when the skipper must leave the bridge for rest, Binkie stood by the relieving first officer and acted as that young man's guide, philosopher and friend.

I found myself the only unoccupied passenger aboard, Hettie, as I have said, being fully occupied with her poor dear self in the seclusion of her cabin. For me, sound and sea-legged passenger, there was nothing to do but to endure utter discomfort and unrest by day and night; the misery of continuous disequilibrium; of never knowing from one instant to another which way the heaving floor on which one stood or sat or reclined would pitch, up or down, lengthways or sideways. My shins healed; but all my body, like everyone else's, became one ache from infinite bruises.

I can only tell you things from my own personal expe-

rience. I passed the horrible time, Heaven knows how. Reading was impossible. As waves were for ever dashing over the decks, even the top deck where the pleasant little smoking-room and drawing-room were situated, any adventure into the open air was fraught with danger. I learned soon that the fo'c'sle was swamped, and that the crew were herded into the comparative dryness of the deck-house on the top deck, where they slept on sofas, floors, where they could. The canvasses protecting the promenade along the saloon quarters and the top of the engine-room, were swept away. The time came when even Toby and Ruth received orders not to appear on deck more than was absolutely essential. The maimed members of the crew were carried to the cabins below on the main deck. Binkie came one awful day to a phantasmagorical luncheon-table at which it seemed that at one moment I was twenty feet higher in the air than he, at the next twenty feet lower, at which too only cold meat could be reasonably served, and warned us that we might be battened down if the gale did not abate.

"I'm not going to be battened down, I'm damned if I am," said Nicholas.

"Why not?" asked Binkie.

"I've got my job and I'm going to stick to it."

Binkie looked at the boy for a few seconds, with screwed-up eyes.

"A bit dangerous in that wireless cabin."

He burst out: "Do you think, because I wasn't old enough to go through your beastly war, that I'm a coward and want to shirk things?"

Binkie smiled.

"No, no, my son. Carry on."

My memories of these dreadful days are somewhat obscure. At my age impressions don't register themselves so sharply as they did when I was a young man. They become blurred into a general sense of environment, be it either one of beauty or of ugliness, of ease or of horror. Yet I do remember that Jones, who waited on us, pallid, imperturbable, steadying himself by some cat-like sure-footedness learned at sea from childhood, poured champagne unerringly into the boy's glass, fairly secure in the wooden frame of the table fiddle, and that Nicholas with a glow in his dark eyes raised the glass:

"Thank you, sir, I'll carry on."

Why champagne at lunch, you may ask. Just as I had asked a day or so previously. But, as Binkie said: "Why not? There's a practically unlimited supply aboard. What else would you suggest better? Tea, coffee, cocoa? Good in their season, but to be taken in moderation. Spirits—brandy, a whisky and soda? Emergency draughts in stress of weather like this. Mineral waters? Dammit, a man must drink something, claret, white wine, burgundy? They'd turn sour on your stomach. What remains? Champagne? Of course, good stuff. Sound for your inside, and gives you fillip enough to enable you to pull through for the next few hours."

Yes, I also remember something on that particular day of storm. It was the first time that Ruth appeared in the dining-saloon. She sat two or three places apart from us, although Toby had tried to make her form part of the company.

Jones, I gathered, would eat at the same table later. Toby muttered something about Ruth looking after him.

He served her, as he served us, with the same impassive

face and manner. By this time I noted he had changed into blue serge and wore a white wing collar and black bow-tie. As a serving-man Jones was nothing if not impeccable in attire. It seemed to be one of his means of self-proclamation. Ruth stayed behind, after we had risen and staggered our way out of the saloon.

Ruth, as I learned long afterwards, waited on him as he sat in a casually chosen seat at the low table set, with fixed chairs, for fourteen people, and gave him champagne from the remaining three-parts-emptied bottle. He ate because he was hungry. She lingered because it was her duty. And then, in the pitching, swaying saloon, so forbidding of dignified posture, that she must sit on a revolving chair near by, there was enacted between those two a scene of passion, jealousy and despair. Rather re-enacted. For it differed little save in detail from the one that had half terrified her in Trinidad.

You must see what I am trying to put before you: this nerve-bound, inarticulate man concentrating the force of his masculine being into a vehement love and desire for the woman.

He talked to her with his eyes and his flickering and elusive gestures. They sat, two chairs apart swivelled outwards, in the pitching, heaving beast of a ship, with the waves dashing over the deck and rising in inverted waterfalls over the port-holes on the weather side, man and woman, elemental male and female. And of the same social class. Indisputable blood-relations. The woodwork of the saloon cracked with the noise of cataclysm. The great hanging electric lamp seemed to be the only thing in the universe that retained its balance. Even that quivered.

The time had come, so she gathered from the pallid man's passionate yet inarticulate argument, for her to make her irrevocable choice. Once more repeating his graphic indication of Toby, he sketched swiftly, on the tablecloth, his conventional map of England, and made this thick mark on London. Again he told her in his aerographic way of the treasure that lay there. And, as far as she could comprehend his signs, it seemed as though it belonged to him. It was a repetition, with perhaps a perfervid passion of detail, of his terrifying protestation in Trinidad.

This was her vague impression, afterwards related. Except for the petty, material things of life she hadn't learned his language with the exactness of Toby. How could she? Toby had definitely set himself to work on this subtle mode of communication with the afflicted man. It was half his own invention. Between Toby and Jones the flicker of a thumb had its part in the conveyance of abstract thought. The rest of us, even Ruth who tried her best, had to be contented with signs which represented the obvious concrete.

So the two sat in their swivel chairs a seat or two apart, in the maddening up and down, from crest to trough, side to side, fore and aft, crazy motion of the light yacht in the centre of Atlantic storm, two human entities trying to get at grips with each other.

From her woman's sex point of view it was simple. This crazy, gaunt man wanted her. She had known that long since. She had the elemental woman's resentment at being wanted by a man by whom she didn't want to be wanted. There was another man by whom she felt she

was wanted, and to whom, for all her fierce pride, she knew that the fibres of her being would yield.

If it had been nothing but that, she would have done whatever a young and kindly Diana does in analogous circumstances . . .

But if illimitable riches may be a secondary matter for human consideration, overpowering perhaps the primary considerations of sex, Ruth may be excused for a state of extreme puzzledom. And then the grotesque happened. Jones read in her eyes, or misread, a newer comprehension of his emotion. Encouraged, he rose from his chair and made a step to hers. He held out his hands to her, and in his face was all of a man's imploration. A more violent and more sudden lurch than usual caused him to reach out an instinctive hand which caught her shoulder. Ruth, interpreting design and not accident, rose and pushed him away. He tripped backwards, she lost her balance and both went sprawling. And it so happened that his arms flung themselves around her.

It was then that Toby, entering the saloon at that instant, found them.

His brows lowered as black as the sea and sky, as he made a hurried approach. He pulled Ruth roughly to her feet. Jones scrambled up.

"What the devil's the meaning of this?"

Ruth steadied herself by a grip on a chair back.

"Of what? And what right have you to ask, anyhow?"

Toby pointed to Jones. "Was he trying to insult you again?"

"Not more than you're doing now."

Toby said: "I beg your pardon. This is no time for foolishness. Mrs. Dalrymple has fallen down in her cabin and cut her face. You had better go and see to her."

She threw up her head and went. The two men stood by the side of the fiddle-arranged saloon-table still littered with the remains of the meal. And for the first time in their lives they regarded each other with enmity. Not a sign of demand for explanation, or of explanation, of the floundering and apparently intimate episode, was exchanged. After a short while Toby motioned to the table, bidding the man to clear it, and stalked, with whatever dignity the fantastically uncertain deck allowed, out of the saloon. On the threshold he turned and, looking back, saw Jones staring at him; staring at him in a horrible lost way, as a loving dog, suddenly and unjustly beaten, might stare.

Toby went down to the cabin-deck, sat at the foot of the companion-way waiting for Ruth. When at last she emerged from Hettie's cabin, he beckoned to her.

"Anything serious?"

"No. Knocked her head against a corner of the washstand and got a slight cut. Bled, of course. She was rather frightened. Lots of people are at the sight of blood. But I've fixed it up all right. There may be a little scar. Just here"—she touched a spot above the right brow. "It has given her a shock, of course, but there's nothing to worry about."

"How do you know?" he asked.

"Common sense."

He was clinging, both hands behind him, to the newel-posts at the foot of the stairway. She said:

"I ought to go and look after Messiter"—Messiter was

one of the crew on the list of injured. "Will you let me pass, sir?"

"Oh, damn your 'sir,' " cried Toby, swinging away so as to give her passage. "I hate it. You know I hate it."

She clambered up the companion-way, an offended Juno. And the dense man didn't know how he had offended.

On the other hand, you must remember that he went about in a state of mind none too clear. He was faced with an abstract fact, as obvious as any concrete fact, the wetness of sea-water, for instance, of which we were having more than proof positive; the abstract fact that he and Jones desired the one and the same woman. To a sensitive man like Toby, it was an unpleasant, shivery kind of fact. To have taken her, as it were by her shoulders, in his strong hands, and say: "Who is it to be? Jones or I?" would have been impossible.

Perhaps I'm an old-fashioned old chap with old-fashioned ideas of social values. In my not too senile mind, these values which are the eternal, incontrovertible, immutable relations of human tones, are unchanged. Let us go back fifty years to get some kind of an analogy.

The young squire falls in love with the gamekeeper's daughter *en tout bien et tout honneur*. Time honoured, or dishonoured, simple seduction is out of the question, his sentiments being on a far higher plane. He discovers that his head-footman, a young man of integrity and honourability equal to his own, is also madly in love with the girl. The young squire has the cultivated judgment and the imagination of the educated man, and is acutely conscious of the girl's dilemma. Both men love her with equal loyalty.

Whom shall she, a girl of all the loyalties and all the clean feminine fibres imaginable, choose of the twain? Could that young squire of fifty years ago go to the girl and say: "Let Jeremiah Buggins go to hell. I'll give you carriages and horses and all you want and make you a great lady, if you'll only marry me." I maintain that the exquisitely miserable young gentleman of fifty years ago couldn't have done it. He would have shrivelled up at the ghastliness (I use a fifty-year-old idiom) of the situation.

Please see what, in my inexperienced way, I'm trying to get at. I want to avoid confusion of sexual thought. It wasn't the primitive struggle between the mediæval baron and his varlet for the possession of the swineherd's daughter. In those dear but dreadful old days, the baron would have incontinently bashed out the varlet's brains with a spiked mace and bidden other varlets throw him into the castle moat and thought no more about the matter than to bid other varlets bring the swineherd's daughter into his presence. But we have emerged from the dark ages of mediævalism, and the sign and the token of our emergence is, according to my old-fashioned ideas, this realization of immutable social values.

My young squire of fifty years ago, who could no more have thought of seducing the girl he craved as a life companion than of desecrating his mother's grave, was reproduced in Toby, honourable gentleman of the present day. And yet, the intervention of the varlet between the gentleman and the object of his sweet desire now, as in Toby's case—then as in the case of my young squire—was a matter of horrible squirming in a man's sex-instincts.

Yes. I'm old-fashioned. You may ask—I say it again—

"why didn't Toby go to the girl and say: 'Who is it to be? Jones or I?' "

Well, if you don't see it as I see it and as Toby saw it, I can't help you.

I'm telling you things, I must confess, in muddled perspective. It is impossible for me now, setting down this story, to disentangle accurately my current impressions from the confidences, confirmatory or negatory thereof, received much later from the various parties concerned.

At any rate, this we must take as certain. From that day until we were all called upon to face elemental things, Toby and Ruth and Jones moved about the ship in the strangest triune reciprocity of love and hatred that has ever been my lot to try to disentangle.

CHAPTER XVII

I MUST come now to an account of sea-horror with which, as a landsman, I'm unqualified to deal. Yet, as far as I can, I must try to make things clear to you.

For a privately-owned yacht, *Nautilus* was a very big yacht, thirteen hundred tons. There are, I should think, only two or three of greater tonnage in commission. But compared with an ocean liner of thirty or forty thousand tons she was but a silly cockle-shell. Captain Culliver held her in proud esteem. His often repeated reassuring formula of encomium, "as sea-worthy as the *Aquitania*," grew monotonous and irritating. Even I knew that, with a propeller damaged, she was something of a lame duck of a craft; also that *Aquitanias* don't sink into the trough of every thirty-foot wave like a paper-boat and mount it giddily into the air just in order to be re-engulfed the next minute. She shivered, she shattered, she rocked, she curvetted, she dived, she rose, she rolled helplessly from side to side.

We came into a real storm which lasted as it seemed to me, for a couple of months, but which the almanac reckoned as a couple of days.

It was from Binkie that I had the first warning of danger. It was early morning. I was in my cabin, ill, aching, exhausted, suffering from everything imaginable except actual physical sickness, when Binkie, glistening in oilskins, opened the door.

"All you people have to be battened down. Captain's orders."

I tried to sit up. "What's happened?"

"A hell of a sea. Decks not safe. A lot of damage done already."

"Better tell me what the trouble is, Binkie," said I. "We're in a tight place?"

"We are," said he. He gave me some technical details which I couldn't catch. I gathered that the smoking-room and little drawing-room on the bridge-deck had been all but swept away, and that the dining-saloon was flooded. He lingered for a moment or two.

"It's a merciful God that took our dear Jane before all this. She died happy at any rate. This would have broken her heart in agony. Her beautiful yacht, you know." His wet features twisted into a kind of smile. "Even if she does get through this, there won't be much left of her. You asked for it, Tom, and now I've told you. But don't tell the others."

He swayed out, slamming the door.

I had been battened down once before, years ago, going with my regiment to Burmah. It had been hot, stuffy and infinitely uncomfortable. But we had got through. God willing, we should get through this time. An old soldier who has gone through a good many wars, the last and biggest, from the point of view of a General of Division, being personally the most safe, must be a fatalist or a bad soldier. "If the damn shell hits me, it hits me and that's the end of it. If it doesn't, I'm alive and so much the better." On the other hand, at the risk of being more egotistical than is necessary for the purpose of this narrative, I make

confession that, during an intensive bombardment, I've had the most acute desire to live; but that, in these dreadful, interminable hours, I didn't care whether I lived or died. On firm land, anyhow, I can assert my manhood; face anything by the help of whatever strength of body or will there is in me. But when it comes to being chucked about like a helpless ball by a band of maniacal sea-gods, the assertion of manhood is entirely vain and ludicrous.

I couldn't stay all day in the airless, creaking cabin, one moment looking through the dripping port-hole straight up into the vault of an angry heaven, and the next moment peering into the very depths of the sea. I had already stuck on some kind of clothes over my pyjamas, when Jones entered with coffee. I waved him away.

I don't know whether I have clearly deciphered the disposition or whatever it is technically called, of the yacht. I want to try to do so. When you went on board, either in harbour or anchored in port, you landed on a broad deck, which had a clear space aft. At the sides there were boats hanging from davits, covered with canvas. Then forwards there was the saloon, owner's suite, top of the engine-room, with a passage-way on each side, a short open space of deck forwards again, looking down on the fo'c'sle. Above this was the upper deck, with smoking-room and drawing-room, and clear of this deck-house the slightly raised bridge, with chart room and wireless cabin. Below the deck on which were the dining-saloon and Jane's private quarters, was what I believe is called the main deck. On it, on each side of a corridor were the cabins, in the hull of the ship, every cabin having a port-hole direct on to the sea. For-

ward of the cabins was the well of the engine-room; and beyond this the plainly-furnished steward's room, corresponding, I suppose, to the servants' hall in a private house.

In this under-deck world were we useless people rigidly confined by sea contrivances overhead. Here were the injured members of the ship's company brought, their mattresses laid on the deck. And here Toby and Ruth tended them. I have a vague notion that somewhere at the forward end of this drab inferno there was a range of hidden bunks in which the stewards, Jones among them, slept.

You see, until that morning, I had never ventured further than the cage of the engine-room; and then, only on one or two occasions, out of idle curiosity. I know nothing about engines, their only interest to me being their air of specklessness and efficiency. These stewards' quarters were new to me. In calm weather they were by no means comfortless. There were chairs; there was a leather-covered settee running round the sides. There was a fairly well-filled book-case. But now the place was a nightmare combination of hospital and prison.

Some kind of cold food was laid out in the fiddles; but I don't remember anyone approaching it. It was as much as we could do to hold on to something so as to avoid being dashed about the deck. Toby and Jones had made the injured men's mattresses fast by ropes.

No one spoke. It became impossible to hear through the awful shriek and swirl and thunder of the waves. Water came in and soon the deck was awash and the mattresses were soaked. And there we stayed for interminable and exhausting hours. It grew dark. Toby crept to the electric switches. No light came. A main fuse had gone. Only a dim

light from the distant cage of the engine-room. And all the time the noise of hell let loose, the noise of earthquake and screeches like those of all the souls in pain in the world. Every now and then the lame propellers were lifted out of the water and the yacht shivered with a sickening vibration.

I saw Jones making signs to Toby in the ghastly half-darkness. Toby nodded and together they crawled their way out of the stewards' room, into the central corridor. Ruth, who had made the journey several times before, followed them. Presently they appeared, staggering drunkenly, half carrying, half dragging Hettie wrapt in a fur coat over her night-dress. I learned later that it was Jones who had insisted on this. The poor woman looked half dead. She glanced about, obviously seeking her brother. They reassured her, so did I rightly conjecture, for their lips were near her ear and I was comparatively far away. Nicholas was up in the wireless cabin, on duty. What he was doing, by way of that duty, I knew not. What was Binkie doing? What was the Captain doing? What was happening to the crew?

Suddenly there was one silence in the foul racket; the cessation of the one comforting sound, the throb of the engines. And suddenly, too, the glow from the cage went out and left us in darkness. A quick flash came from an electric torch behind which stood Jones. It was one of those that had been used for the treasure hunt in the Cave des Diablotins. This I learned later. At the moment, however, I was singularly impressed by the man's forethought and resourcefulness. He manœuvred a few yards towards the cage. In the tempest I could just distinguish the clang of steel

gates—and in the circle of ghastly light thrown by the torch, I could see dreadful blackened men approach and throw themselves down in the ever-mounting wash of water, deadly fatigued.

The torch turned. I saw Toby clutch Jones's arm. Signs passed. The torch must be precious. No waste of light which might mean life or death.

So we remained in the pitch blackness. I noticed that the far-off light at the end of the corridor, by which Hettie had been guided from her cabin, was out. I gathered that the whole ship's lights were out. I remained in my chair secured under my arms by a set of rope loops rigged up, God knows how many hours before, by the ingenious Jones. I didn't care. I was too far gone with weariness to care. When one is on nodding terms with seventy, one hasn't the resilience of youth. If my number was up, it was up. That was all there was to it. My dear wife had taken chances on my life for thirty years. . . . Still, I had rather looked forward, after an adventurous career, to dying in a comfortable bed. Well, perhaps it was all for the best. A dying man in a comfortable bed, surrounded by his wife and family makes a damned agonizing exhibition of himself. Far better for everybody and from every point of view that there should be no poignant prolongation of the inevitable.

You see, I had got it into my head, apparently like everyone else, that the end of the whole business was near at hand. And I was more or less right.

There came to us in this utter darkness, a sudden thunder of the solid sky and the solidified Atlantic hurtling down above our heads in the devastating detonation of

high-explosive. Water swirled about my knees. By Jones's torch quickly turned on, I saw a fantastic group—I think Ruth, Toby and others who had taken refuge in the room —I noticed the grimy figure of a stoker—busy themselves with the men on the soaked mattresses.

I slipped my arm free of the friendly loops and rose to help. And I pitched down and something seemed to snap in my head and I lost consciousness.

The next thing I remember was awakening to a grey awful dawn and to a grey awful sea, in a great boat tossed about at the mercy of the waves. I became aware of the presence of Binkie and Hettie and of a crowd of sailor-men haggard and drenched like ourselves . . . I think Binkie poured some brandy from a flask down my throat. I know I relapsed into unconsciousness. Anyhow, the recital of my sensations, however interesting to my wife and girls, into whose arms I eventually fell,—otherwise how could I be telling you this?—has nothing whatever to do with the story. As a matter of fact, I was too satisfactorily knocked out to have many sensations.

But there were other people who had every sensation possible to be extracted from a ghastly shipwreck.

The final sea that smashed the already tortured delicate shell of a *Nautilus,* was the one of which we had been terrifyingly conscious. As far as I can gather from Binkie, the only man who knows anything about it, the one stupendous wall of sea breaking on the yacht just finished her. The pretty deck-house on the bridge-deck had gone long ago. The saloon-deck on which was built that which was tech-

nically a deck-house had been swept away. The engine-room had been swamped.

Binkie said he took off his hat to Culliver. A fine sailor. He saw what was coming. Gave orders for the boats. Gave orders to Binkie to clear us all up out of the battened down main deck, and put us in the boats. Binkie and detailed members of the crew came down, just in the nick of time, before the foreseen hideous avalanche of solid sea came down on us. And it was Jones's treasure-hunting torch that had enabled the rescue-party to save all the folk that had lain around us.

The end of the *Nautilus* had come. The engine-room was flooded. The engines were out of action. The rudder was swept away. The yacht, as if it had been a model in a silly dinner-table ice-cream to which a knife had been horizontally applied, had been cut down to the boat-deck. The Atlantic Ocean filled her and she had gone down.

But the going down had been a nightmare of black and weltering catastrophe. It had occurred like the instantaneous disaster suffered by a field hospital hit by a shell.

On second thoughts, I don't know whether it wasn't worse. I stick to land, even in conditions of hellish warfare, as a safer element than the sea.

Anyhow, there it was. You must imagine it for yourself. Tropical darkness. Maniacal fury of sea. A ship going down, anyhow. Boats the only silly, slender chance of safety; boats that rose and fell from the level of St. Paul's Churchyard to the top of the cross on the Dome. There were many sick men to be thrown into the boats. My unconscious self among them. There were a couple of women.

Binkie got his woman all right. Toby and Jones got theirs. No! That isn't fair . . . No!

"My God!" says Toby now. "Ruth wouldn't stir until the whole lot of cripples were pitched in. I had to grab her round the waist myself, and pitch her into the boat. God knows how she didn't manage to break her neck."

When waves, in the utter black of night, rise from the foundations to the dome of St. Paul's, how can you expect people to be transferred from a sinking vessel to little cockle-shells of boats?

Many lives were lost. It was a tragedy—one of many tragedies of the sea. To this day, the horror of it mingles more with my dreams than the Boer War, Indian Frontier wars—nerve-racking, beastly things—and the nightmare of the Greatest War of All.

To throw people into boats in a tempest in the blackness—I don't know how it is done. Yet people were thrown. A dozen or two were thrown into the raging sea. A boat-load vanished from the face of the waters.

As far as Toby could judge, there were seven folk in his boat, when they abandoned ship in the utter blackness of the tropical night without a star to give them comfort; with nothing but the inky blackness of a tempestuous element of water.

God knows how it happened. Perhaps, as a religious sort of man, I might say that God ordained it. The same grey dawn to which I awakened, and, thank goodness, out of which I very soon faded again, found the three of them alone in the boat.

The fury of the storm had to a great extent abated. The boat pitched like a walnut-shell from trough to

trough. It was light and had shipped astonishingly little water. They were wet through, and the extra wet on the bottom where they lay, between thwarts, mattered very little.

In the first glimmer Toby didn't see Jones who was curled up in the bows. He was conscious only of Ruth's body against his, his arms around her. For hours it had seemed a right and inevitable posture. They looked into each other's faces and smiled. Then, aware that they lay in water and that they were stiff and cold, and also that there was less torment of the sea, they crawled up and sat in the stern-sheets and looked for the first time around the hopeless horizon. Nothing but the grey vastness of angry sea and lowering sky. Not a speck to indicate ship or boat. They had passed the hideous night in a state of half-coma. Any idea of handling the craft had been out of the question. They had hung on, for dear life, as long as possible. The oars, if any of the crew had tried to use them, had been swept away. Only the broken blade of one floated below them.

At first they thought themselves the sole survivors. Soon they saw Jones curled up. With great care Toby crawled from thwart to thwart, and reaching the man, felt his body. He was alive, asleep, apparently unhurt. His head rested on a strange familiar bulky thing, which after a while Toby recognized as his kit-bag, with which, for old association's sake, he always travelled. Obviously, Jones had packed it and lugged it out of the cabin, with his uncanny foresight, to the top of the companion-way, and managed to throw it into the boat. His head was on it now, guarding it like a faithful dog. Toby let him sleep, crept back to

Ruth in the stern-sheets, his heart greatly softened towards Jones.

Ruth, meanwhile, fumbling in the locker, had found the conventionally ordained set of stores, practically undamaged. A flask of brandy, bars of chocolate, biscuits, a tin of fresh water. Thirst had not yet beset them. They munched a little of the provisions, drank a gulp or two of the brandy which warmed their bodies starved with cold. Jones still slept.

They were close together. Again he drew her to him. The wind had dropped; the only sound remaining was the sullen anger of the sea. They could speak and hear. Their heads touched.

"There's not much chance. Do you mind?"

"So long as I'm with you, what matters?"

"It seems rough luck," said Toby, "to find the woman one's been looking for all one's life, only to lose her in a day or two."

She murmured—and even in the crashing of the sea, her murmur was delectable in the man's ears.

"Am I really the woman—my dear?"

"My God!" cried Toby. And for the first time their lips met and storm and death were blotted from their consciousness, and they knew the wonderful thing that is life.

He gripped her more closely and she gripped him. It was the supreme hour in their threatened lives.

"I felt you were meant for me the first moment when I saw you standing in the garden. I've a memory sketch of you, in London, which I've shown nobody. And you?"

"I don't know. I think I must have loved you ever since I was born."

"We were made for each other," said he. "I take back what I said just now. What the hell does it matter whether we die together?"

"Yes. Like this," said Ruth, "what does it matter?"

A fountain of spray drenched their faces as they kissed, and the wet salt on their lips seemed to be a blessed sacrament. And they lingered on the kiss and in the embrace until, in a common flash, they became aware of something human penetrating their souls' environment.

There, in the bows, on the crest of a wave, looking down from a height ridiculously greater than the boat's length, was Jones who hung on with both hands to the gunwale. There was Jones staring at them with madness and despair in his eyes.

A glinting band of light in the East gleamed far away over the grey-green waters. Some refraction of it caught Jones's white face. In another moment, he was down in the gloom of the trough, and they regarded him from an upper world. Toby and Ruth moved apart. Jones sat in the bows. He flickered signs to Toby. Toby flickered back:

"Yes. She loves me, and she is mine."

How could such language be otherwise than crude?

There was madness in the man's eyes. They left Toby and fixed themselves on Ruth who regarded him defiantly, her figure drawn up in its magnificence, her bust defined beneath the wet and clinging garments. The boat pitched up and down and swayed to the rhythm of the waves. Jones put his hand behind him. On the next crest he stood crouching and something flashed from his hand, whizzed past his ear and sank for all eternity into the sea.

It was a knife, sudden and unexpected, hurled by one who long ago had learned the seaman's trick.

Toby sprang up, after the first dismaying fraction of a second, and clambered over the thwarts towards him. He tripped, the boat had got beam on, and a wave washed him overboard. Ruth shrieked, half rising from the insecurity of the stern-sheets, and Jones sat gaping in horror from the bows. She held him with her eyes, screamed words which he could not hear, and pointed to the sea. Jones put hands to an agonized head and leaped. Ruth leaned over the stern of the crazy boat. She could only see the bobbing heads of the two now and again. They were not so far away. . . . There was the broken oar with the blade swishing about. She groped for it and when, on a crest, catching sight of them and attracting Jones's attention, she cast it towards them with all her strength.

They both gripped it. She could see that Jones had some master hold on Toby, although Toby was a strong swimmer. If only she could guide the boat towards them. But the rudder had been torn away long ago in the night. The broken oar, which she idiotically thought she might use as a paddle, she had cast to them. She could only wait. They were on the weather-side. They were coming nearer. A kindly wave brought them near. Strong swimming did the rest. They were alongside. Ruth stretched out her arms into the trough and gripped Toby's hands and her strength brought him into the boat. Then they both reached out for Jones and got him and hauled him on board, his hands clawing at the gunwale. And just when they thought him safe, he pitched anyhow head foremost into the sea-tossed

boat and crashed against the edge of a thwart. Blood dripped into the wash at the bottom.

Jones lay unconscious, bleeding, sagging amidships. They drew him, as best they could, to the stern sheets. Ruth tore off her under garments and with the despairing strength of her young fingers rent them into strips of bandage and bound up the head of the unconscious man. Toby helped her with his shirt. By the time they had finished, they were naked all to their over clothes. Brandy poured through Jones's lips had no effect.

They took turns in holding him more or less steady on the wet cushions and in baling out the bloody water from the bottom of the boat.

The eastern band of livid illumination, to their naïve surprise, turned out to be the advent of the blessed sun. Within an hour the clouds melted above them. Within two hours they were dry and warm. Streaks of blue appeared across the green ghastliness of the sea. But the sea's anger is long-lived, and the walnut-shell of a boat still rocked and pitched at the caprice of the foam-edged waves.

CHAPTER XVIII

In the sunshine I revived, though feeling very weak and ill. Doctors told me afterwards what had occurred to my elderly mechanism, and with the details of it I certainly don't intend to worry you. It took me a long time to recover my full health and strength. Now that I have recovered them, I am not ungrateful for the breakdown. It saved me from the miseries of a hideous night.

I revived to the extent of being acutely aware of my environment. I was in the little motor-launch. As a craft of locomotive power, it was a thing of naught; but it had, as a floating entity, something of comfort. I lay on cushions beside the gunwale, a rope or two securing me. Hettie on the other side lay similarly provided for. She smiled faintly across at me. She had long since got over the triviality of sea-sickness; but was in the last dreadful stage of sea-exhaustion. To me she appeared the most pallid woman I had ever seen. Her eyes, generally so blue and dancing, had faded into colourlessness.

Binkie, sitting in the stern, leaned down to me.

"The worst is over. We'll be bound to be picked up. That boy was signalling to the last moment. He must have got an answer. He gave the position all right, and we can't have drifted very far."

"And the boy?" I asked.

He glanced instinctively away from me for a second.

"He's not in this boat. Perhaps in another. With the skipper . . . I don't know."

"And Toby?"

"He had charge of a boat of his own."

There was an hour of comparative calm. The sun warmed my aching body. Then somebody groped about, seemingly on all fours, for when one is supine things appear in a false perspective, and provided some kind of food and drink.

Binkie, who had been much occupied with the cleaning of binoculars and in scanning the now sunlit horizon, suddenly cried:

"Thank God! There's one boat all right."

"Let me see."

He drew me up into a sitting posture and gave me the glasses. But I could perceive nothing but a sickening heave of elements.

"Take my word for it," said Binkie.

I slid down again, recumbent, feeling glad that others were safe, but otherwise indifferent to circumstances. The hot sun, the gradual cessation of pitch and toss from heaven to hell, contented for the time being my limited natural desires.

Suddenly Binkie, ever horizon-scanning through the glasses, gave a great cry and pointed.

"They've got us! She's coming straight bows on."

And so were rescued the survivors of the wreck of the *Nautilus*. It was all a time of wild excitement and forgetfulness of present evils. I have a confused idea that we made signals with something, a shirt or a jacket, and that Binkie said: "They've answered. It's all right." Also that Binkie, his eyes to the binoculars, said: "She has stopped to pick up the other boat. Three of them. One seems to be knocked out and has to be carried."

And then a while afterwards, a vast white cliff, like the bastions of some castle of God, dominated us from the summit of heaven. The damned bit of my mechanism that the doctors will tell you about, if you're interested, gave way again.

I found myself in a perfectly comfortable cabin.

As I've told you before, what happened to me has nothing to do with the story. So long as you accept my statement of facts, it's all that matters.

The vital fact is that we were picked up. The two boatloads of us. Those in the launch, Binkie, Hettie and myself and some of the crew; those in the other boat, Toby, Ruth and unconscious Jones. For signs of the other boat, for there were three that were lowered, the steamer cruised about all day. Eventually they must be given up as lost.

It was still rolling weather; but what did I care, lying in a restful bunk? After the crazy pitchings of the yacht, it was in very truth the rocking cradle of the deep.

A cool doctor came in and did things to me and told me all about myself and prescribed what I should do. Complete repose, of course.

"The more charming clever people are," said I, "the more are they platitudinous."

In answer to my inquiries, he gave me news of our little circle. Sir Gregory Binkley and Major Boyle were suffering, as might be expected, from fatigue and exposure; but a day's rest would set them right. Mrs. Dalrymple had a healthy constitution and concerning her eventual health no one need worry. With Miss Tellifer, as with Major Boyle, there was nothing whatever the matter. A girl of splendid

physique. Some of the surviving crew were in a bad way. I gathered he referred to those on the sick-list who were rescued from the steward's room with the rest of us. But there was one man suffering from a dreadfully broken head and consequent concussion of the brain, Major Boyle's confidential servant, by the name of Jones. . . .

That, of course, was the first I had heard of it.

"And Mr. Egerton—Nicholas Egerton? And the Captain of the ship—Culliver?"

He spread out deprecating hands. Why ask? And it was only then that I learned the awful magnitude of the disaster.

The hours passed. I must rest, but I was not so helpless an invalid that I couldn't receive visitors. The Captain came. Binkie had taken slips out of his methodical mind and handed them in to the powers that were on board. The Captain knew all about me. I'm a very humble person in the estimation both of myself and my family, but Lieutenant-Generals of some distinction are not fished up out of the Atlantic every day in the week.

And then, of course, came Binkie. He and the two women, and the survivors of the crew, had been rigged out by kindly passengers.

In the thrill of unexpected adventure, the rescue of waifs from a wreck, the human interest flies to the extravagantly generous. If Toby had asked for a lip-stick, all the women on board would have thrown their pretty vanities to him, with the abandonment of Spanish women who used to cast God knows what of vanities to the splendid Espada in the Bull-ring. I didn't tell Toby that. Had I

done so, he would have accused me of having a blastedly filthy imagination. I reserved the quip for my wife and family, whose response was less crude, but equally effective. They seized in the general, which I was trying to get at, on the miserable particular. The only point I wanted to make—with perhaps my misguided sense of humour—was the one I want to make now; and that is, the assertion of the deep, sweet humanity in men and women that alone, of things in the world, makes human life possible.

Here we were, a miscellaneous congregation of people picked up out of the sea; and here were all of us, from highest to lowest, treated with every kind and description of loving kindness.

Binkie came, still alert, yet a sad-looking little man who seemed to have grown greyer round the temples. We talked as one must needs do of things poignantly tragic.

Our dear and wonderful lady, Jane Crowe; her beautiful ship at the bottom of the Atlantic. Now and again the finger-tips of the high gods have a tender touch.

And Nicholas, the young man at war with an uncomprehended world? He had made good, said Binkie. Just done his duty, in the ordinary way of young Englishmen. Stayed in the wireless room till the end, with the result that our rescuing liner had picked up call and position and had saved our lives. Possibly he and Culliver had been the last on the yacht, probably had been swept away with the bridge before the boats were lowered. Yes, he had seen Hettie. She was heartbroken.

And Toby came and told me his story. Some of his story. It was not till afterwards that I heard of the knife-

throwing madness of Jones. The poor fellow lay in a cabin with a terribly broken head, receiving every care that human brain and hand could give. Regarding Jones, it was practically the same story as the ship's doctor had told me.

"I'd rather like you to know," said Toby, "that I've misdescribed Ruth. In fact, you must know it. I've told Binkie. Ruth was Lady Jane's lady-companion. You see the difference? Described as maid, she would rank with Jones. Described as companion, she ranks with us—saloon. Snobbish, perhaps; but from my point of view essential."

"You seem to be the only one that has found a gleam of comfort in the whole tragic business," said I.

"You see what I mean?" said Toby.

I sighed. "Yes. I see." And I smiled up at him, I suppose rather wearily.

Then we talked, as humans are bound to talk, of the death of our dear Lady, and of the death of the Boy who had Made Good, like so many hundreds of thousands of his like in the war; and of stout Captain Culliver and the many gallant fellows that had perished during the ill-starred voyage. Then the doctor came in and declared me to be too tired for further strain of talk, and Toby left me.

But we talked of all these sad happenings, over and over again, all of us, many times, not only until we eventually separated to go to our respective homes and interests, but we talk of them to this day. And this is all, I think, that is becoming for me to set down by way of telling you of our mourning for the dead. Every one of us has a corner in his soul veiled off secretly, the veil never to be lifted.

To dismiss, as one must dismiss, the rescued members of the crew who, each man, had his inner emotions and anxieties for the future—for beyond solicitude as to their material welfare with which Toby and Ruth concerned themselves, how could they come into our lives?—we were reduced to six units, figuratively naked, thrown on the mercy of a social group, the ship's company and the passengers. And we were all knit together by tragic ties.

During my convalescence, which was of shorter duration than I feared, I reflected perhaps platitudinously on the clean sweep that the wreck had made of innumerable things.

My own case of decorations, for instance. I had been bound to take them with me, in the event of official functions at Government House. As a matter of fact I had worn them twice. Now they were at the bottom of the sea. Some could be replaced, on representation; others—foreign ones which I rather valued—could not. Vanities, in a way, of course; but when such vanities are a record—and a record expected to be displayed on occasion—of the infernal hard work of a lifetime, they have a moral value. The hard-working business man gets his ultimate reward in money; the artist and writer in money to a certain extent, and in fame; but the old soldier has only his medals and stars and things to show what he has done. "General Gump? Who the devil's he?" But when he dines with the Fishmongers' Company and puts on everything he has got and blazes like a constellation, you see that he is really a devil of a fellow. Well, well, . . . if I didn't believe in what mechanicians call a compensating balance, which corrects so many faults in life's working, I should be a very

ungrateful man. Let me state here, although it's a matter of little account and certainly not one for further reference, that the good young Samaritan who, being of my build, shared half his wardrobe with me is now the excellent husband of my daughter Vera.

There was Binkie with the evidence of years' work swept away: all his books, papers, calculations connected with the Jorico treasure. The very bags of stalactites and sun-dried diablotins which, ostentatiously sealing-waxed, he had been so careful to stow on board the yacht in the public view had gone down into the deep. . . . Yet he was a dogged little man. He repeated his assertion that the secret of the treasure lay in Bristol, which city he would spend the rest of his life in raking with a small tooth-comb.

Of Hettie Dalrymple there is little to be said. She had lost the boy, her brother, a poignant grief. But she had much in life to live for. There was her own boy at home. There was her incomprehensibly adored Binkie, whom she would marry as soon as we could find ourselves once more settled in permanent conditions.

There was Jones, temporarily knocked out. God knows what he had lost. Perhaps Ruth. You must remember these are my reflections on a convalescent bed. From Toby's half confidences I gathered that he had lost Ruth and that Toby had found her. Toby, except for the general sorrow of things, seemed to have suffered no loss at all. For reasons, fairly obvious, he had promoted Ruth to saloon rank. Thus, in all probability, more things had been swept away from Ruth than from any of us. Her blouses, her aprons, her maid's demure insignia had been swept away; her maid's designation; her past life. She had been thrown by Toby

into the boat a maid-servant. She was rescued a drenched, half-clad, any kind of woman, whom Toby declared a lady.

It was all very confusing. But enough of my senile meanderings.

It was surprising enough to Ruth herself. She had yielded to Toby. When the great white liner heaving in sight bore down on them, he gave his orders in his curt way.

"When we get on board we'll have to give an account of ourselves. Jones is my man. But you weren't Lady Jane's maid. You were her lady-companion. You've got to be with me all the time. Understand?"

She replied somewhat weakly: "Yes. But what about the others?"

"I'll fix the others," said Toby. "Don't you worry."

Toby, once aboard, lost no time in fixing the others.

Binkie, in the first moment of fixation, cried: "Good God!"

"Good God or bad God," replied Toby, "it's got to be as I say, so put Hettie wise as soon as you can. I'll tell the General."

Apparently Hettie took it calmly. What did it matter? It was Toby's affair. Besides, her grief was her paramount emotion.

Toby indeed had lost little. His kit-bag, packed in some surreptitious way by Jones, contained changes of raiment, toilet necessaries . . . even his tooth-powder and bath-room slippers. A handy steward did a bit of drying and pressing for him and he was equipped.

"What a wonder of a man!" said Toby.

But Ruth was hard to be fitted. She was tall and well

made. It took three not unexcited women passengers, with the aid of scissors, needles and thread, to turn her out in presentable decency. And it took her all the fear of God and Toby to prevent her from saying the fatal: "Thank you, madam."

They kept apart, on the sunny deck and the pleasant public saloons, from the passengers as much as they could. They bore obvious traces, as all of us did, of tragic shipwreck, and the kindly, sensitive and reserved English folk respected their claim of privacy. So did they with Binkie and Hettie when she was able to appear. So did they with me. But in the quintette, being odd-man-out, I was naturally more gregarious than the others. Binkie and Hettie perhaps were left alone more than the other pair. She had lost her only brother in the wreck, and somehow she had procured a black frock. Young promenaders stopped laughing when they passed her deck-chair.

Thank Heaven the liner was on a homeward voyage. One outward bound had picked up the signal and had raced to our course just after we had been taken on board. We had been lost in mid-Atlantic. There was another week of it. But it didn't matter much. The sea smiled, with its countless smile, the *anerithmon gelasma* of Æschylus, as who should say: "I couldn't have been as ferocious as you make out. It was all a mistake. It must have been quite a different element. Pull yourselves together and think a bit!" . . . I sent wireless messages of reassurance to my family. I received a reply. All was well. We had everything that could make for comfort.

The attitude both of Binkie and Hettie towards Ruth was loyal from the start. Toby had proclaimed her as the

woman, a lady, whom he was going to marry. Whatever private opinions (shared very naturally with me) as to the advisability, suitability, adaptability, all kinds of -abilities, of the romantic marriage they had, they yielded to Toby's blunt pronouncement. Except at meals, at a corner table in the gay and yet simple dining-saloon, the five of us were rarely assembled together. General conversation on these occasions was restrained. The hideous tragedy of our joint adventure, furtively admitted in all combinations of reciprocal glances, weighed us down. There was but little light talk. Our remarks were confined to the most external of things. Ruth had no reason to find herself not accepted among us. Both Binkie and Hettie were very kind to her. There was no lack of breeding in Ruth. In my mind, she has always been a great woman.

They had peculiar reasons of their own for not encouraging the companionship of the passengers. But for the crazy unsteadiness of the boat, Ruth would not be sitting there. The open knife aimed at her neck would have gone true. They shuddered within themselves when they thought of it, and the thought was continuously in their minds. It was only then that she told Toby in full the story to which she had bound Jane and myself in secrecy: the story of his madness in Lady Jane's bedroom, when, after manifesting his violent passion, he had kissed Toby's photograph and by his frantic signs had threatened her with the vengeance of his jealousy. He had kept his word, carried out his threat. There was no doubt that it was she for whose throat the slung knife was destined. Both had seen the intention in the man's wild and blazing eyes. And at the same moment of horror he had not belied his devotion to

his master. For he had plunged, almost suicidally to his rescue, into a sea tempestuous with waves twenty feet high from trough to crest.

Mutely, each felt the unutterable tragedy of it—superadded, of course, to the tragedy that weighed generally on all of us survivors. They were near together, held by a bond of sex. But the medium of communication between their hearts and their souls had been severed by the knife that had flashed murderously in the grey, wave-racked morning. And their hands seemed to be still reddened by the bloody water that they had baled out of the boat, while Jones lay white and ghastly, his head swathed in the rude bandages that would for ever show the spreading crimson stain. They spoke of Jones, of his present condition, a matter of immediate interest; but of the awful and vivid act that had occasioned it, they said not a word.

She met him once, after breakfast, on deck, where he sat in his assigned chair, and sat beside him.

"How is he this morning?"

"Very much the same. The wound is healing. But he's still unconscious. Whether he will ever recover consciousness the doctor doesn't know."

"Suppose he did, and recognized you, wouldn't it be dangerous?" Toby asked. Which was as near a reference to deep affairs as ever occurred between them.

She raised her shoulders. "No fear of that yet. The doctor says . . ."

Toby listened to his report. "I wish I could do something besides sitting there keeping watch."

"Thank goodness for Nurse Williams."

There was an English trained nurse on board, a pas-

senger, going home on leave from a Barbados hospital, who had offered her services. Toby had accepted them on the condition of acceptance, on her part, of a generous fee. She regarded the engagement as an extra week's justification of her reason for existence in a curiously constituted world and as affording a welcome addition to the pocket-money she could spend on her holiday. But as she couldn't sit night and day in the little cabin, Toby and Ruth relieved her. Now and then a stewardess came on short duty. But the ship was full and the stewardesses were busy women. Thus it came about that Toby and Ruth saw a great deal of the unconscious Jones.

"As soon as we get within reasonable wireless distance," said Toby, "I'll get busy with arrangements for him. Ambulance to meet us. Nursing Home. I'll get Ollcutt. Made his name in head cases and concussion and so forth—what Jones has got—during the war. I know him. The doctor's delighted, says he's the best man in London, and of course will write him a complete account of the case."

"And afterwards?" asked Ruth.

"I'll have to go slow with him," replied Toby reflectively. "I've been thinking things out. My little cottage on the Berkshire Downs—supposing I made it over to him? Bought him a pig and a duck and a bee and started him farming, and provided some motherly kind of elderly woman to look after him. You see? I could easily get it into his head that after all this illness the doctors had forbidden him to carry on his life with me in London. The country his only chance. I'd run down now and then and see him. You wouldn't mind?"

"Why should I mind?" she asked, her frank eyes full on him.

"Of course you wouldn't. You're too big," said Toby, and, as though the point had been settled, went on: "He'll get used to farming, as he has got used to any old thing that has turned up in his life. The most adaptable chap I've ever met. You see I must provide for him, don't you?"

"Of course."

"Then that's all right. Let's have a little exercise."

They rose and tramped round the deck, a handsome couple, gazed at admiringly from the rows of deck-chairs.

"After the *Nautilus*, this seems to be enormous," said Ruth. "But I suppose the American liners are much bigger."

"As far as tonnage goes, there are Cunarders seven times the size of this."

All of which was very desultory conversation.

It was not until we had passed the Azores that they got into something like grip with each other. There were always Jones and the flash of Jones's knife between them. Toby went through much agony of spirit. That Ruth could by any remote possibility not be the woman predestined for him never entered his mind, I know. He has told me, in very definitely set terms. For social differences, says he, he didn't care a damn. If he was Lord of Creation and could have his way, why—he would stand her up on the threshold of "Palmyre" and ordain that as a condition for entering his damned shop every woman should bow down and kiss Ruth's feet. The only crab—such was his vernacular—was that Ruth wouldn't stand for it. Any-

how, this is enough to show you that, deep down in his primitive soul, he clamoured for Ruth, and Ruth only, among women. But, on the other hand, there was a very sensitive Toby for Toby to deal with. The primitive Toby would have slain the man who had tried to murder the woman he loved. The other Toby was beset by all sorts of misgivings. He couldn't go and kill Jones, in spite of the present ease with which he might have done it. He couldn't abandon him to any kind of fate. The stricken man's devotion to him, almost animal in its loyalty, precluded such action. He must provide for Jones for the rest of his life. On the other hand, how could he explain to Ruth his obligations towards his would-be murderer, and how could he expect her angelic sympathy? It is true that she had silently accepted the position. But a woman's silence on vital questions is very disconcerting. So much had Toby learned about women. And yet, in spite of many trials short of direct attack, he had never succeeded in establishing between them the essential confidence.

It was one evening, as I say, when we were just past the Azores that they came to a closer understanding. I remember the evening. The breeze had freshened and the ship was rolling slightly. We were having after-dinner coffee in the pleasant veranda café and Binkie was once more going through the argument for the continued existence of the treasure. I have done my best to show you what a fine fellow Binkie really was. I have also told you that there were times when I should have liked to take him by the scruff of his neck and pitch him overboard; this, when he talked in his pragmatical way about the disastrous treasure, was one of them. Anyhow, I couldn't stop him. He recapi-

tulated the points with which we were only too wearisomely familiar.

"To put the thing in a nutshell, my dear fellow," said I, "your Ancestor Jorico got away with the treasure camouflaged in one or two of the sacks of a whole cargo of sugar. This was in . . . ?"

"Eighteen hundred and eight," said Binkie.

"His curious records round about that period show that he valued it at half a million of money. That amount of money he left by a will made on his death-bed. Therefore he knew it to be intact and in safe keeping in 1830. That's all you can go upon. So why elucidate the obvious?"

Binkie sighed. "I only talk about it because I want to be sure of your sympathy and belief in my sanity."

Toby leaned back, pipe in mouth, his hands clasped behind his head.

"Do you know what I think? The old man busted the lot during his lifetime. You say he retired in 1810, when he was fifty-five. He had a Venezuelan or Trinidad-Spanish wife. Suppose he was fed up with her. Suppose it pleased him to lead a Jekyll and Hyde sort of life? We have cases like it in the newspapers nowadays. Do you think the old buccaneer would be contented to sit down in a little Bristol cottage all his days? No. His age against the theory? Good Lord, a successful pirate had to be as hard as nails. At seventy he was still having a hell of a time in London. . . ."

"Why London?" asked Binkie.

"Where else in England could you have, even now, a hell of a time? Can't you fancy him taking the London coach and disappearing for a week at a stretch? Can't you

imagine him going to the sacks which he had stowed safely away somewhere, so that his wife shouldn't know, and taking out a handful or two of moidores, or whatever they were, or a ruby or diamond, and going to low-down money-changers and shady jewel-merchants—well known to the piratical profession—getting a tenth of their real value, and then going on the most unholy jag? In those days there were gambling-hells all over the place—and there weren't any police to raid them. Do you think a hard-bitten pirate, Jolly Roger, crossbones and everything, wasn't a gambler? Do you think drink and women didn't appeal to him? Well, that's my notion, anyhow. Advancing years telling on him, he went home after his orgy to Juanita, and it amused his sardonic mind enormously to pose as the pattern of domestic, municipal and churchwarden respectability. In this cheery way he got through his fortune. Robbed right and left; by money-changers, crooks in gambling-hells, ladies of the town, as they were called. . . . And what about blackmailing old comrades? One can easily get through a nominal half-million consisting of jewels and foreign bullion in, say, fifteen years, at that rate of living. That brings him up to a hearty old reprobate of seventy! By that time the sacks were empty."

"Good God!" cried Binkie. "That sheds a new light upon it. But why did he leave the half-million to his son, in his will?"

"*Gaga*, my dear Binkie. Just *gaga*. Senile, if you'd like it better. What did he die of? You don't know. Neither did anybody. In those days you died reasonably and no one bothered. But I'll bet my life he died of senile decay. His

mouldering mind retained a glimmer of the past wealth and he bequeathed a phantom fortune."

Binkie lit a cigarette. "That theory's damned upsetting. It never occurred to me. I'll have to think it over to see where the flaw comes in. How did you get at it?"

"I'm a bit of an artist in my way, worse luck," said Toby, "and so afflicted with an imagination."

"I think Toby's hit on the right solution," said Hettie. "So why should you go on worrying yourself to death, dear?"

Binkie took her dimpled hand and patted it, and smiled.

"I'm not going to worry myself to death as long as you're alive."

Ruth and I exchanged glances, jointly and mutely agreeing that it was quite a pretty speech.

Toby knocked the ashes from his pipe, and rose and turned to Ruth.

"It's stuffy. What about a breath of air?"

She rose too. He took from her chair-back a borrowed wrap and threw it round her.

"Good-night, all."

They went on deck.

It was a fresh night with a pale moon. Only here and there in a deck-chair was a passenger hardy enough to prefer the night chill to the warmth of the saloons. They leaned over the rail.

"That was a good story," said Ruth. "But why did you tell it?"

"I've been making it up for a long time. It has the ad-

vantage of being perfectly plausible, and if Binkie believes it, it'll save him from going stark mad. The more I've thought of it, the more I've inclined to my Jekyll and Hyde theory. Binkie has found all sorts of records of what the old man did with what we may call his legitimate fortune—the one his wife knew of. But there's not a word about the treasure. It all went, as I've said, bit by bit, over a hundred years ago."

Ruth asked: "Are you sorry?"

"For what?"

"For not finding it. When you started you all had hopes of getting this money. You did for one."

"Only because I would have cut myself free of 'Palmyre' and started on a life of my own choosing."

"And if Sir Gregory really does find it, you would take your third share?"

"Why not?" he laughed. "But there's no such luck. We've got to forget all about it."

"I'm glad you feel like that."

Except for the throb of the engines and the rhythmical beat of the Atlantic swell, it was very quiet. After a while they turned and found themselves the only occupants of the deck.

"We're getting rather used to being alone with the immensities, you and I," said Toby. "They seem to be the proper surroundings for us."

She replied with a sigh: "I wish they could always last."

"Why shouldn't they?" he laughed.

"In a few days we'll be back in England. Cooped up somewhere. What's going to become of us?"

"The first thing we'll do is to get married," said Toby

cheerily. "Special licence. No futile hanging about. And then we'll see."

She put her hand on his shoulder. "I think we must see for a long time first. It's all very well to think of marrying a girl like me in the immensities as you call it; but it's quite a different matter in Mount Street and 'Palmyre's.' "

"The very thought of 'Palmyre' makes me sick," cried Toby, with his arm around her. "And I know it must make you sick too—the idea of a hefty man like myself messing about with women's clothes. I'll throw it up if you like; go wherever you want; do whatever you think is good for both our souls."

"That's a great responsibility."

"Halved when shared."

She shook her head. "That's not really true. Once people are married, they've got, in a way, to share responsibilities. But no man can share with a woman the responsibility of marrying her; and no woman can share her responsibility with a man." She touched his cheek very tenderly. "I've never cared for anyone in any kind of way before in my life. It would be impossible for me to love any man after loving you. But—oh! let me speak, my dear—I can't marry you yet. It wouldn't be fair to you. I have so many things on my mind and my conscience. I must get them all cleared up first—if ever they'll be cleared up."

Toby caught her close to him and kissed her, and she returned his kiss. When he released her she drooped. He cried triumphantly:

"What do you say now?"

She drew herself up and smiled.

"The same as before. Just as you see I don't change my

love, you must understand I can't change my mind."

He threw himself about impatiently.

"What's in your mind and conscience? Tell me. I may help you. The petty, snobbish social side of things? Good God! You and I have gone through too much together to think of anything so rotten."

"It's because we have gone through things," she said slowly.

"Do you mean Jones?"

"Jones does come into it," she said, with a woman's air of reservation.

He went off, of course, into his apologia for his attitude towards Jones. What the devil could he do with the fellow, beyond what he had planned and set out before her?

"My dear," she replied at last, "if you think I feel you're being disloyal to me in providing for Jones, you've got hold of the wrong end of the stick. If you didn't see things so steadily and honestly I shouldn't love you. But there's still Jones to be reckoned with, when he recovers."

Toby swept a puzzled brow.

"I don't see that. Jones, in a moment of stress—we were all somewhat unbalanced—had a crazy homicidal impulse. The moment after, his mind reasserted itself and he jumped overboard to rescue me. When he recovers, supposing for the sake of our argument he remembers the incident, he'll be overwhelmed with remorse and shame."

"He won't," said Ruth.

"Anyhow, putting things at the worst, he'll be far enough away from us to be no danger to you. And I'll be at your side, with my protection, for what you may think it worth."

Toby was a trifle hurt, and leaned over the rail staring out into the black night. She once more put her arm round his shoulder.

"You don't seem to understand Jones, my dearest. I wish I had the power to put into words what I feel about him. His affliction has made everything human about him intense. His devotion to you. His love for me. His religion. . . ."

Toby nodded. Yes. Jones was as devout a fellow as you could wish to meet; getting up at unearthly hours in order to attend Mass. Indeed, there was a Father Finnegan in a great Roman Catholic church near Mount Street who, being his confessor, had to some extent learned his language. Father Finnegan had called on Toby to learn something about his strange penitent. Toby, as was Toby's courteous way, had asked Father Finnegan to lunch, and told him all he knew about Jones, and gave him an elementary lesson in aerography.

Yes. Toby agreed that Jones was deeply religious. Ruth caught him up.

"That's the point. When he kissed his medallion of the Virgin and swore to kill me, he meant it. He meant it more than the ordinary normal man."

"So you think . . . ?" asked Toby.

"I don't think. I know. And Toby"—it was the first time she had called him by his name, and she clutched his arm tight—"for God's sake don't think I'm a silly woman scared out of her life by a man threatening to kill her. I'm not. There are so many things all bound up in it. For instance, do you suppose Jones will be content to vegetate in your Berkshire farm? No. When he recovers he'll have

three intense purposes of life. You. Me. The treasure.

Toby swung round in amazement.

"The treasure?"

"Yes. Jones has never done a silly thing since you and I have known him. He has carried out everything in his head in a deadly logical sort of way. How do you think he traced mother and me down in Kent? I don't know. But he did. In some sort of way he has found out that the Jorico treasure you've all been looking for is in London. He'll get it. Jones will be a trouble between you and me. So"—she clasped his cheeks in her hands and kissed him—"give me time."

"My God, my child," said Toby, "I'd give you eternity if I had it and it would be any good to us."

Binkie came up, looked around the dark deck and spotted their vague figures.

"Oh, there you are. I've been looking for you all over the place."

"What's the matter?" asked Toby.

"Jones," said Binkie.

CHAPTER XIX

BINKIE announced the doctor's report of a change in Jones's condition. A change for the better, of course. Toby had better go down and see. He went off. Binkie remained with Ruth. He drew in a great breath.

"After all, the fresh salt air of the sea—there's nothing like it. Shall we have a little turn?"

They walked round the deck, talking of Toby's theory, by which he seemed to be greatly impressed. Her own doubts she did not confide to him. According to Toby, the more acceptable he found the theory, the better for his peace of mind. During the walk he entertained her with actual stories of the Jekyll and Hyde life. There was Charlie Peace, for instance. By day, the model husband, father, and—he too—a church worker; a virtuoso on the fiddle; an imposing monument of respectability. By night the most desperate burglar of his generation. The only difference was that the former was a man of austere and ascetic habit, cultivated, no doubt, in order to keep brain clear and nerve cool for his burglaries, while the other, having no more crimes to commit, and with all the resources of civilization at his command, went off regularly to lead the life of the complete satyr. The more he talked, the more he agreed with the theory, until at last he gave Ruth the impression that he had discovered it himself.

Meanwhile Toby went down to Jones's cabin. There he found doctor and nurse.

"The first bit of progress," said the doctor. "I thought I had better let you know at once."

Toby looked down on the man's face, colourless and sharp between the head bandages. He could see no difference. The nurse explained. For the first time she had noticed a natural movement in his body, hitherto still like a living corpse. Then he had for a second opened his hitherto closed eyelids. She had summoned the doctor.

The doctor smiled with the satisfaction of one who has snatched a human being from the immediate jaws of death. He confirmed the nurse's report. Again the patient had given signs of returning life. He talked to Toby a long time about lesions of the brain and cortices and things with which the layman was unfamiliar.

"In unscientific speech," smiled Toby, "I take it that you mean the human machine needs just a little coaxing and accelerating, and it'll start again."

That was what the doctor meant. Both pulse and heart were stronger. He had prescribed certain treatment. The nurse would stay with the patient all night, and he himself would be ready for a call at any hour. Possibly the crisis might occur before morning; but at any rate, tomorrow there must be a radical change. In all probability he would open his eyes again, this time awake, and after a few vague and weary instants would fall into a natural sleep. Natural awaking from this would signify the beginning of recovery.

"Hopeful?" he cried, in answer to a query from Toby. "Of course I'm hopeful. Good Lord! If a medical man doesn't start in faith and work in hope, he'll have to sell

matches in the street and live on charity. Come up to my quarters and have a drink."

Toby agreed, having first found Ruth in the veranda café, where she was waiting for him, and told his news.

Dr. Simmons—the title was but one of courtesy as he could only put the letters M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. after his name—was a young man, not unlike the ill-starred Nicholas. He had qualified after the war. He welcomed Toby in his little dispensary which communicated with his tiny cabin, and from a cupboard stocked with noisome physic drew a bottle of whisky and a syphon. He filled a couple of glasses. In the air hung a faint tang of iodoform.

"I wish to Heaven, Major Boyle," said he, "I knew more about the brain. Your man, Jones, is a specialist's job. I've specialized on kidneys—diabetes, Bright's disease, all that side of it."

"Why specialize and then take up a general practitioner's job like this?"

"To get general experience."

Toby, in his kindly way, made the young man talk about himself. He had been House Physician at a big London hospital. The first professional plum that can be plucked. The distinction had secured his engagement with the Steamship Company a year ago. But he wasn't going to be a ship's doctor for ever and ever. By no means. He had ambitions. Yet he must earn his living; his father, a country solicitor, had been hard put to it to see him through the hospital to qualification. He must fend for himself. There was an aunt in the offing who might lend him some money later on. There was the great specialist, Sir Julius Warren,

ready to tow him along his own renal channels of success. . . . An assistantship, a partnership with a general practitioner in a little country town—that wasn't his idea at all. This was better. Sir Julius had encouraged him. A doctor's life in England was so narrowed by inevitable circumstance. Why not devote his first professional year or so to seeing a bit of the outside world and mixing with all sorts and conditions of people suffering from all imaginable kinds of complaints? It broadened one's views; saved one from the specialist's curse: the fixed idea that every patient must be suffering from his own pet speciality in disease.

"I also think a fellow ought to know something about the funny kinky ways of ordinary men and women; get a bit of a hang on common psychology, if he's going to make any kind of success."

Toby laughed sympathetically at the young man's frank earnestness. With such in it, there was still hope for post-war England.

"I've panned out like this," said Simmons "—and I hope I haven't bored you to tears—just because I'd like you to know I've made good in my own job and look forward to making a career out of it. And also to apologize to you in a sort of way. We've got to specialize nowadays if we want to get out of the rut. I've specialized on kidneys. I'm up against a complicated brain case. Concussion on top of a previous concussion, which apparently produced amnesia. And I haven't even a Head with me."

"Head?"

"The text-book on the subject. So I'm just doing my

best. You see, a fellow like Henry Head would tell you all about Jones in no time. I can only go upon general knowledge. I know as much—or as little—about the brain as I do about the throat or the heart or the joints. So please don't curse me if he slips through my fingers. Ever since he came on board I've scratched my memory like a barnyard cock for grains of knowledge about the brain. I've lain awake at nights since he came aboard puzzling him out, by the light of what you told me . . ."

"My dear fellow," said Toby, "you've been a sort of Luke, the dear Physician, to my friend Jones. And your knowledge of his condition is as stupendous as my ignorance is abysmal. We'll leave it at that. Now what is your conclusion of the whole matter?"

"I think he'll recover. That is to say, he'll be able to get up and go round and about as usual. But brain cases are extraordinary. I don't believe that a man, such as you describe him to be, can be illiterate. There has been compulsory education in England for nearly sixty years. There has been no possibility of a man like Jones, as a child, escaping the educational Inspector. He must have learned to read and write. As I say, what I know of amnesia, aphasia, agraphia and the rest of it is scarcely worth knowing; but I do remember the elements. . . . Of course he's deaf. Nothing can cure that. The mine explosion, or whatever it was you've told me of. But it's certain that when he joined the army he could hear and speak. And it's incredible to me that he shouldn't have been able to read and write. Now there have been cases where a sudden shock like this readjusts the former lesions of the brain. It's within the prob-

ability of scientific knowledge that he may wake up a normal human being—except of course for the deafness which comes from an organic injury."

"My God!" cried Toby. "If he does it'll solve all sorts of problems with which, saving your presence, you have no concern."

The young doctor drained his glass.

"If he does recover in that way, I'll give up kidneys and take to brains. It's a damned sight more interesting. You're up against the incalculable. It's fascinating. A renal specialist—why, he's got the whole thing cut and dried like a sanitary engineer. But a brain specialist. My God! He's living always on the threshold of the unknown. I think I'll go, if you don't mind, and see how Jones is getting on."

Early in the morning Toby went to the dispensary and found Simmons occupied in his daily routine of attending to the minor ailments of the crew.

"Come in. I shan't be a minute."

A sailor was waiting while the doctor with the expert manipulation of a bar-tender mixed medicine from several bottles.

"Take this three times a day and it'll fix you up all right."

The sailor saluted and went his way.

"Well?" asked Toby.

Simmons shrugged. The case was getting beyond him. Jones had continued, during the night, to show signs of restlessness. He would awake, apparently to no consciousness of surroundings, and go to sleep again. There was some new lesion that he couldn't get at. A mere speck of extraneous matter pressing on the brain could play the

very devil with it. In a hospital they could put him under the X-rays and find out all about it, and a surgeon could operate. He was convinced it was a case for operation. . . . Even if he had a proper X-ray installation and discovered the cause of the lesion, he could no more operate on the brain than navigate the ship. Thank God they were only a couple of days now from port. If he could carry on till they landed him at Avonmouth, why, there was the Bristol Infirmary close at hand, plugged full of specialists.

"I'll go along and see him," said Toby.

"I'll join you as soon as I can," said Simmons. "By the way, the nurse must get some time off. I wonder if you'd get Miss Tellifer to relieve her. The stewardesses are busy just about this time—and of course this isn't their job. Whereas Miss Tellifer's a sort of rock of efficiency."

"She'll go on duty with pleasure," said Toby. And then a sudden thought hammered at his head. "Wait a minute, though. Wouldn't I do as well?"

The young man smiled. "You'd do, of course, Major Boyle; but, if you'll pardon my saying so, an efficient woman in an emergency does the right thing by instinct, the efficient man wastes time in reasoning out what would be the right thing to do."

"Tell me one thing," said Toby after a few moments' thought. "In these intervals of awakening, it is quite possible that he may recover consciousness—recognize people? Myself, for instance?"

"Any old thing's possible."

"Probable?"

"Why not? Who knows?"

"I think, if you don't mind, it would be better if I kept watch instead of Miss Tellifer. He's more used to me."

The young doctor saw something in Toby's eyes and made a yielding gesture.

"Of course. Just as you like. It was a mere suggestion on my part."

You see Toby was faced by an obvious possibility. When Jones lay like a log with heart and pulse both registering some sort of life, Ruth could work her shift without fear of consequences. But what would be the consequences of Jones opening conscious eyes to his vision of Ruth, whom in his all but last conscious moment he had tried to murder? And he was on the tantalizing verge of consciousness. Only expert scientific knowledge guided by X-ray visualization could tell for certain. The risk would be too great. Ruth as a nurse for Jones must be ruled out.

"I'll be free in a quarter of an hour," said Simmons.

"I'll swallow some breakfast and meet you here," said Toby.

A while later they went down to Jones's cabin. The nurse had nothing to add to her early morning report. She was tired out, after many hours of anxious duty, but left, after a good nurse's way, somewhat reluctantly. Jones lay in a natural sleep. Simmons gave Toby simple instructions. Probably he need do nothing but sit and watch. He could smoke a cigarette or two if he liked. It wouldn't injure Jones. On the contrary, if he awakened, the familiar smell of tobacco might just hit a sense and be beneficial. If anything should happen, a threefold ring of the electric bell would send steward or stewardess scurrying all over the ship for him. He had arranged all that.

So Toby was left alone in the small cabin with the sleeping Jones.

The weather was fair. The only motion was the rhythmic roll from the Atlantic swell. Pale sunshine came in through the port-hole; also soft hurrying air and a suggestion of spring through the port-hole's two inches of opening.

During the past few days Toby had kept watch just like this. But it had been watching a living corpse. Hence the immunity of Ruth from recognition. But now, the real centre of life, the brain, had resumed its function, and might manifest itself at any instant in a way undivinable by man. To the nurse, it was an interesting case. She had little knowledge of Jones's antecedents. To employ such imagination as she might possess did not occur to her. Besides, the most competent nurses can't afford to be imaginative. But Toby had both knowledge and imagination.

Who and what, after all, was this bit of human jetsam thrown by the tide of battle years ago into his shambles of a trench? What complicated web of thoughts, emotions, desires, despairs, actuated this man cut off practically from his kind by some queer happening to that soft pulpy stuff that is the human brain? Emotions? The all-powerful motive of his later life had been his devotion to the master who —after all, through nothing but careless kindness—had rescued him from an unintelligent life of perpetual hospital and given him a vitalizing reason for existence. Then had come Ruth, and he had asserted himself as a sex-stricken man, desiring the woman with the nervous energy of body and spirit. Here were elemental motives quite comprehensible. It was their dreadful entanglement that presented the complicated problem.

Toby watched and wondered. The features of the sleeping Jones seemed to have refined down to almost classical model. There was the pure, straight nose, and fine lips and good curve of the jaw, which were the foundations of Ruth's beauty. Well—of course—he was her first cousin. He had in him the Tellifer blood—that of a race, as the name implies, rooted in England since the Norman Conquest. A hundred or so years ago the Tellifers had been gentry. His mother, Ruth's mother's sister, had run away with a nameless seafaring man. A Roman Catholic. . . .

Toby thought of Simmons's dictum which confirmed his own half-formed past conclusion. How could a man of Jones's bright intelligence have never learned to read or write? It was inconceivable. He reproached himself for not having questioned Jones more closely. As a matter of fact, putting up human soul against human soul, his attitude towards Jones had been criminally casual. Why had Jones interested himself so keenly in this abominable treasure-hunt of Binkie's? Why had he made the triumphant spot of London on his roughly drawn map? How had he discovered Ruth? In fact, back to the beginning: what the devil went on in the hidden mind of Jones?

There he lay breathing regularly in the white bunk. The few days' growth of beard accentuated rather than defaced the delicacy of his features.

Toby lit a cigarette. The morning sunlight increased in gladness. Toby opened the port-hole wide. The sweet salt air swept the cabin. All was very still. Just the gentle creak of the woodwork and the barely perceptible pulsation of the engines broke the calm silence.

Jones slept, a far greater sphinx to Toby than he had

ever been. He had been knocked out by a mine explosion during the war. It was perfectly, physiologically possible that this second concussion might—as Toby expressed it—"knock him in again." And there, on the bit of Utrecht velvet-covered seat beneath the port-hole, sat Toby in the uncanny presence of the Unguessable.

Simmons put his head through the door. Toby signified with a nod that nothing had happened. The doctor disappeared. Toby lit another cigarette. The day developed into one of perfect spring. The cabin was flooded with sunlight. Toby heard the distant ship's bells that indicated noon. He threw away his cigarette and took up the number of an old magazine which the nurse had been reading the night before. It was a drowsy hour—he had been awake since five.

Suddenly he heard a throaty sound from the bed and started up. Jones was awake. His blue eyes looked into vacancy. In a second or two his hands went up and rubbed the eyes mechanically. Toby stood like one confronted with a resurrection from the dead.

Jones stirred, turned, met Toby's eyes in a strange stare. Then, suddenly, in a fraction of a second, he bolted upright to a sitting posture, brought his right hand to the salute, and spoke:

"Corporal John Gregory Jorico, 'D' Company, Fourth East Suffolks."

Then his jaw sagged, and his body sagged, and he fell back limp and huddled.

CHAPTER XX

THERE we were, the knot of us five, at the end of the gaily equipped veranda café, gathered together in dismayed and puzzled discussion of Toby's tidings. In the first place, we had never contemplated a fatal end to Jones's concussion. His death was a shock, one not minimized but rendered even more poignant by the losses we had sustained on the disastrous voyage. Toby sat with his head in his hands, saying very little. Something of beauty had suddenly been swept from his life, the dog-like devotion of a human being. Ruth's eyes were red with tears. You must remember that at this time I knew nothing of the circumstances which led to Jones's accident. I had to judge then by my general knowledge of a poor devil torn between love and jealousy of his master. That the girl should mourn a pathetically afflicted blood-relation, and also a man who had loved her very truly, was the most natural thing in the world. Hettie and Binkie and I were each, in our several ways, affected by the poor fellow's death. He was an honest soul; a vivid personality. To all of us he had endeared himself by his understanding and ever ready helpfulness.

This is a tribute I must pay to our collective humanity. His death came as a personal calamity to each one of us. I must pay it in order to insist on a just proportion between our sorrow and our tremendous interest in the amazing declaration of his name.

"Corporal John Gregory Jorico, 'D' Company, Fourth East Suffolks."

I have little scientific knowledge of such things. But to me, and to all of us, it seemed obvious that his suddenly awakened mind had gone back down the years, at the sight of Toby, to the first sight of him when he had tumbled into the trench and had been unable to formulate the soldier's instinctive account of himself.

Jorico. An uncommon name. No wonder he had been unable to express it pictorially. "Jorico" by itself might have struck us as a curious, though perhaps vague coincidence. But "John Gregory Jorico," with the Christian names that had gone down the family from the old Ancestor himself to Sir Gregory Binkley, afforded, within the fallibility of human conjecture, proof positive of descent from the original stock.

"There's only one way of accounting for it," said Binkie. "You all remember the name of Ancestor Jorico. John Gregory. He had two sons. One was Gregory, the other John. Gregory was lost at sea. I showed you the locket with a lock of his child's hair, and his mother's inscription, and the note on the back of the miniature made by his brother in after years. Jones can't be descended from John. The records are clear. Therefore, he must be descended from the elder son, Gregory. Therefore, good God! he was the head of the Jorico family. The last survivor, in fact, of the male line, now, by his death, extinct. The last of the Joricos. Amazing!"

It was. The more we discussed, the more amazingly certain emerged the identity of Jones. Toby, the practical, said:

"At any rate, we can now get his record from the War Office."

"Yes," said Binkie, "that may put us on to something tangible."

Hettie said: "Why worry, dear?"

"Yes, why?" asked Ruth.

"The treasure."

"But haven't I demonstrated to you, my dear Binkie," said Toby with weariness, "that, given the filthy nature of this beastly ancestor of ours, there can't be any treasure left?"

"Last night you practically convinced me," Binkie replied. "But John Gregory Jorico lying there dead, poor chap"—he made a vague gesture—"sets up another line of inquiry. Why was Jones, as soon as he saw the little devils dancing on the chest in my old book, so keen to come with me? Why afterwards did he tell Toby, in his own way, that the treasure was in London?"

Alas! Jones, otherwise John Gregory Jorico, lineal descendant, beyond doubt, of the old pirate, was dead and could answer no questions.

"My God!" cried Binkie, "if only he could have lived, with returning speech—and consciousness—even for twelve hours!"

Hettie put her hands on his arm.

"My dear, don't say that. There were only two things we could have wished for him. Either to recover for good and all, or go out, at once, as he did."

"You're quite right," said Binkie, kissing her hands. He turned to us, by way of apology. "Hettie's perfectly right."

"You see," said Hettie, in her plump businesslike way, "whatever secret there is—and it must be only a very dim family tradition handed down a hundred years, through

generations of uneducated folk—it's hidden for ever now."

"I suppose it is," said Binkie, scratching his cheek. He smiled. "Well, my dear, we'll give it up. The treasure, I mean. But still, it'll be jolly interesting to get on the track of Jones and follow him up to old man Jorico."

Hettie laughed indulgently.

"Why, dear?"

"Because I hate an unfinished job. It's a mark of inefficiency. I'm either efficient or I'm a damned fool or a rotter." He turned to us with a laugh. "I don't care a hang about the treasure. It's gone into Jones. But the whole romance of the thing is too exciting to an imaginative man like myself. . . ."

Parenthetically I looked at his dry face in wonderment. Binkie thought himself a dreamer, a poet. Binkie, whom I had ever regarded as the petrified corpse of prose. An imaginative man like himself! My brain reeled a bit from a sort of whirl of changing values. Again I looked at Binkie and caught a light in his eyes. Then it struck me that I had been the man of prose, and Binkie had been the man following the poet's dream.

Without imagination how on earth could he have brought us five extraordinarily differentiated human units together into tragic conclave, in this homeward bound ship? The conception of Binkie as an imaginative man knocked me sideways. I staggered a bit and awakened to the conviction that Binkie was right. . . .

". . . an imaginative man like myself . . ." I caught the echo. He went on . . . "A matter of mere romance. I must get to the bottom of it. There's the original deathbed will. 'To my son . . .' Which son? He had two. Greg-

ory, the elder, was God knows where in 1830. But son John, the ultra correct Bristol merchant, couldn't have been very near to the old buccaneer's heart. . . . All my beautiful records, which might, by the light of present things, explain the whole business, are now at the bottom of the Atlantic. But anyhow, I feel convinced that the son referred to was the elder, Gregory, who followed the sea, a scapegrace, his father's darling. It stands to reason. That's why I'm going to follow the elder branch. For fun if you like. Really to get the whole thing in the round. Finish my job. I can't work downwards from Gregory Jorico, elder son of Ancestor Jorico, but I may work upwards from John Gregory Jorico Jones. You can't deny that it's damned fascinating. I'm going to the War Office as soon as—as soon as it's decent."

Well, that was Binkie's point of view. His interest in the matter seemed merely genealogical and academical. Toby and Ruth, as I have tried to show you by the light of late revelations, had their own reasons for being profoundly moved by the death of Jones. Personally, selfish old man, I longed for my first foothold on good English soil.

But, after consultation with Toby, I did one thing. I sent a long wireless message to an intimate crony in the War Office, asking him to find out whether a Corporal John Gregory Jorico, "D" Company, 4th East Suffolk, had been returned as missing on the date when he fell into Toby's trench. A telegram received at Bristol told me that the records proved Jones's final and only account of himself to be exactly correct.

I longed for home. But before this consummation of my desire we passed through a doleful enough time. The Cap-

tain requested us not to mention the fact of Jones's death to the passengers. If the news leaked out, it couldn't be helped. There was no point, however, in advertising the dismal occurrence; especially so near as we were to port. We saw less than ever of the acquaintances we had made on board. The addresses of those who had rendered us material kindnesses we already had. We were prepared to return such kindnesses, when we reached England, to the best of our ability. I have already told you of the way in which I repaid the young man who fitted me out in his gorgeous raiment. Cynics may say that it was a dirty trick. But, really, after all, Vera is quite a nice girl. . . .

Our reserve was all the less noticed because at the end of a homeward voyage there is much personal preoccupation. Hours grow longer, the nervous strain more intense. What will home be like after so many years of absence? Will family threads be picked up at the point where they were broken off long ago? What will folk dear to us look like? Will they have changed? What subtle difference will there be perceptible in Mary now that she's the mother of three children? Good Lord! Don't I know the almost sickening anticipation of home-coming? For full twenty-four hours before sight of land one thinks: "Which is my least sun-faded suit?" And one holds a ghastly clothes parade in one's cabin.

I think our fellow-passengers recognized the fact that we tragically shipwrecked people must be even more nervously anxious to get home than they themselves. It was, therefore, an easier matter than we at first realized to skim lightly over any chance allusion to the injured member of our party.

The ship's carpenter, the Captain told us, would make the rough coffin in which the remains of the poor fellow could be decently carried ashore. It would be brought into the cabin secretly, by night.

It was before the sudden end of Jones that Toby, the ever thoughtful, discovered that there was no Roman Catholic priest on board. It was almost unprecedented, said the Captain, the great mass of the population of Trinidad being of the old religion, and English priests always coming and going. There were an Angelican parson or two. But their ministrations to an unconscious Roman Catholic would have been more or less futile, and now, to a dead one, quite meaningless. We were all reverently agreed that, when we got to Bristol, we would hand the body to his Church, and, as far as things spiritual went, leave him in its care. We couldn't do more.

The capable nurse performed the last bodily rites. We went down, by ones and twos, to look our last on the gallant fellow who had triumphed over a physical infirmity scarcely known to man, and whose thread of life in the infinitely intricate web of human destiny was so closely entangled with ours.

The nurse and Ruth had worked him cerements of linen, in their women's secrecy. So he lay, as during the course of a long life I have seen so many of those dear to me lie, in the strange and fitting dignity of death. I looked down on him; a sphinx, yes; a sphinx of queer nobility; at any rate, a man.

Binkie and Hettie went down together. They joined us on deck, both tearful.

"I give up the damned treasure," said Binkie, in a husky

voice. "It was his, anyway. And if it's useful to him in the Next World, by God he's welcome to it."

Toby and Ruth stood hand in hand together by the side of the bunk, the last night at sea. In half an hour, they were told, the ship's coffin would be brought, and the doctor and nurse would superintend the inevitable transference. Toby broke down. The manifold loyalties of Jones surged like waves before them. The last loyalty, the silly trivial loyalty, the kit-bag packed during the racket of hell let loose, and the sight of him, in the break of the livid dawn, sleeping on it, guarding it like a dog.

"Come, my dear," he said, guiding her away.

But she slipped her hand free.

"Let me stay a bit," she called after him.

We landed at Avonmouth. My wife and daughters met me. Wireless had told the world of the tragedy of the *Nautilus*. But wireless, too, had told my dear ones of my personal safety. If I had been allowed my own way I should have followed our dismal adventure to its dreary end, but I was not allowed. Three beloved women carried me off, willy-nilly, to London.

Binkie and Hettie, Toby and Ruth stayed behind to pay the last honours to the dead man. They stayed for such days as was necessary at a Bristol hotel. The poor remains of Jones—of Corporal John Gregory Jorico—must be lodged in the mortuary. The two men had to busy themselves with the authorities both of the Municipality and of Jones's Church.

They were having a meal during the depressing interval in a far corner of the sparsely patronized provincial hotel.

A silly band depressed even the British decorum of the sham palace. It inhibited what might have been the heat of a boiled turbot. The pretentious room was drenched with sullen tepidity. There's no turbot alive or dead which can stand the dismalness of "Madame Butterfly" played by a half-decayed orchestra.

Binkie, who cared little for food, ate his lukewarm fish with appetite.

"Don't you think it strange," he asked, "the queer freaks that Destiny gets up to now and then? What could be queerer than the present one? There are thousands of spots in the world where the last descendant of old John Gregory Jorico might be buried. But fate brings him back to Bristol, the home of his ancestor. Haven't you thought of it?"

"Of course I have," said Toby. There could have been none so poor in imagination as not to have thought of it. "As you say," he added more politely, "it's a grim and ironical chance."

"I think," said Binkie, after a pause, "I could find the old man's grave. I've never looked for it. But it must be in the graveyard of the present St. Stephen's. What do you say to making an expedition first thing tomorrow, and if we come across it, see whether we can get a grave for poor Jones close by? It would link up the generations, as it were. Their deaths a century apart—as near as doesn't matter."

"That's a bit sentimental," said Toby, helping himself to vegetables handed by the waiter.

"I'm sorry to disagree with you, Sir Gregory," said Ruth, with a flush, "but I think it'd be rather horrid."

"Why, my dear?" Binkie was always suave to Ruth.

"I shouldn't like to think of Jones being buried anywhere near that dreadful old man."

Binkie smiled at her. "His mouldering bones have by this time purged their offences."

"But his soul hasn't," said Ruth. "No. As far as we know, Jones lived sweet and clean—so let him be buried sweet and clean in his own place."

"I'm afraid I agree with Ruth, dear," said Hettie.

Binkie yielded. It was only an idea—sentimental, perhaps, according to Toby.

"Besides," said Ruth, "he must have been a cousin of yours and Toby's Heaven knows how many times removed. But he was my own first cousin, my Aunt Sophie's son."

"And you feel strongly about it," said Binkie, touching her hand.

"Well, I do, Sir Gregory."

"Then that's the end of my foolish idea."

Later, when they were alone, she asked Toby:

"Was I wrong in saying that to Sir Gregory?"

He put his arm round her. "You were perfectly right. It was a filthy idea of Binkie's."

"That old ancestor of yours gives me the shudders," said Ruth. "When we get to London, I hope we shall never hear of him again as long as we live."

"Amen," said Toby. He drew her to him. "We'll have lots of other things to think of."

You must know, parenthetically, that since Ruth's reception among us as the woman that Toby was about to marry, she had been admitted into the family confidence.

There was scarcely a detail of the treasure story with which Toby and Binkie himself had not made her familiar. She had been a godsend to Binkie during this second and less eventful part of our homeward voyage. He could tell the story all over again to a new and acutely interested listener.

"It's tremendously fine of you," said Toby, after a while, "to stand up for Jones—his clean and sweet life—in spite of what happened that morning."

"It was a moment of madness, dear," said Ruth. "Forgiven, and all the better forgotten."

CHAPTER XXI

They buried Jones in the modern Bristol cemetery, just the four of them as mourners around the grave. Before leaving the city, Toby ordered a stone to be engraved with his name, John Gregory Jorico, and the date of his death.

They travelled together up to London. Hettie had offered to give Ruth the spare room in her flat which Nicholas had occupied. But Toby had disdained foolish convention. There was ample room in Mount Street, and an eminently respectable father to vouch for all the proprieties to a censorious world. And who in the censorious world, save Ruth's own mother, would care a damn?

So at Paddington Ruth and Toby took leave of their companions and drove to Mount Street. There they found awaiting them Mr. Wilfrid Boyle and Mrs. Tellifer, who had been fully informed of the situation by letters from Bristol. What had been the nature of the interview between the respective parents, no man (or woman) to my knowledge has yet been able to discover. Mrs. Tellifer was proud, Mr. Boyle exquisitely courteous. Of the treasure-hunt and the Jorico ancestry neither had a remote notion. They had been faced by the stark fact of the projected marriage. From their reception when shown by a flustered Mrs. Baxter, the housekeeper, into Mr. Boyle's little library, where the two elderly people stood tense and nervous, they gathered the impression that something like this must have been the summary of their conversation:

"Even if I had not had the privilege, madam, of meeting the young lady, I take it for granted that any woman chosen by my son Toby for his wife is a daughter-in-law perfectly good enough for me."

And Mrs. Tellifer: "I could trust Ruth with untold gold and untold men. She's a girl in a thousand. Not one to make mistakes. But I don't hold, sir, with a girl marrying out of her class."

"But, my dear lady, on your own showing, your account of her father's history, she's marrying back again into her own class."

Some understanding like this had surely been arrived at by the time of Ruth and Toby's entrance.

Mr. Boyle kissed Ruth's cheek with a: "Welcome, my dear." Toby, with beaming face, said to Mrs. Tellifer: "I'm sorry to have to take Ruth from you. But I'm afraid I must."

And Mrs. Tellifer, with a sad smile and moist eyes, replied:

"It's the way of life, Major Boyle."

Ruth took her mother off to Toby's room which had been prepared for her. Toby, in the library, recounted to his father the tragic story of the last voyage of the *Nautilus*.

"As for Ruth, well . . . it's my affair, after all, isn't it? But, naturally, I want you to like her. For me she seems the woman specially created by God for me and me only."

The prim, elderly gentleman came to the back of Toby's chair and laid his hands on his son's broad shoulders.

"And a damned fine woman He has created for you. God bless you, my boy."

Toby looked up and back at his retreating figure in some

bewilderment. His precise father was not given to emotional outburst. He rose.

"Do you really mean that?"

The old man smiled. "Of course I do. Why, the night she was there—the night of the fog—why, dammit! I almost fell in love with her myself."

"Thank God you pulled up on the boundary line, my dear," laughed Toby. "Otherwise I shouldn't have had a look in."

So all was well.

Mrs. Tellifer would not stay for dinner—a matter of class pride, so foolish, yet so subtle and real. She must get back to the cottage near Sevenoaks, her excuse being the untrustworthiness of the girl in charge of her establishment.

The three dined. Mrs. Baxter had cooked an excellent meal. The maid, Emma, waited. They talked, as talk they must, of shipwreck and disaster.

"I'm a home bird," said Mr. Boyle. "And the circumstances of my life have made me a peculiarly unadventurous bird. But once I had a perfectly putrid crossing from Corsica to Nice. I gather that if I multiply my sensations during those nine or ten hours a thousandfold, I'll get some idea of what you went through."

A while later he raised his glass of champagne.

"My dear," said he, "there was a lady called Desdemona who loved Othello for the dangers he had passed. You have shared with Toby far more dangers than Othello ever heard of. If you will accept me as a father, you're my daughter."

He touched her glass and also Toby's.

Later, when they were alone together in Toby's leather-

appointed sitting-room, she asked, with smiling tearfulness:

"What have I done to deserve all this?"

"You've given God a helping hand in creating you, I suppose," said Toby.

If a woman wants greater tribute from a lover, she must be hard to please.

The next morning brought confrontation with the remorselessly practical and material things of life. Beyond a few garments supplied by charitable passengers, and some elementary and necessary adjuncts purchased in Bristol, Ruth was destitute of clothing and other cognate appurtenances essential to woman's comfort and decent parade. She must go and buy everything she needed. Toby was for sending her forth with ample funds. What they had passed through together swept away conventions. But Ruth declined. She had savings in the bank; also a small heritage from an uncle who had died a year or two before. She laughed in her proud way.

"I can come to you, at least, in my own belongings."

Among his letters he found one signed "Vincent Dunne" on behalf of Dunne, Charteris & Co., Lady Crowe's solicitors. He had received the will from the Trinidad lawyer, and would be glad if Toby and Sir Thomas Forester would make a joint appointment with him to discuss, as co-Trustees and Executors, the details of the will. There was something (I had an identical letter) about presumption of death. Between Toby, myself and Mr. Dunne, communicating by telephone, an appointment was fixed for the following afternoon. I may mention that beyond telling Toby, after Jane's death, that he and I were co-Executors, I had

maintained the silence about the family legacies which Jane had imposed. It was no good setting the "poor dears," as she had called them, speculating as to the amount of the legacies. No one was so stoically and serenely inhuman as not to speculate: "Will it be ten, twenty, fifty, or a hundred thousand?" No. Time enough when the will was shown us by the lawyers. As a matter of fact, Toby had all but forgotten his responsibility under Jane's will, and certainly did not dream of inheritance.

Toby set out for "Palmyre." Miss Torkington, grim and trim in shingled greying hair, black frock and flesh-coloured stockings, welcomed him in the soft carpeted, subtly perfumed shop. It was fairly late in the morning and the place was in full Spring activity. Well-dressed women customers were sitting about. Saleswomen, discreetly and professionally attired, were showing their materials. At the far end a mannequin preened herself in an old gold costume before a group of two or three. Women, all women. All the most futile of outside women. Not a suggestion of the true inner warmth and beauty of woman. On the contrary, all that was worst. . . . Toby surveyed the scene with a distaste more horrible than he had ever before experienced. He had been drawn into this hot-house by his mother, had half accustomed himself to its atmosphere. But now, after months of free air, a man's life, with adventure and all the issues of life and death, on re-entering it he felt suffocated. He responded mechanically to Miss Torkington's platitudes. Yes, they had had a beast of a time; shipwreck wasn't funny in the least. And poor, young Mr. Egerton! So sad! Yes. But the boy had gone down doing his job. . . . How about the business?

Miss Torkington smirked grimly. They had been carrying on wonderfully considering his absence. Fallen off? Oh, no. Quite the reverse. As soon as she had received his wireless message she had called in the accountants and their rough statement of the present position lay on his office table. They went up to his Louis XV private room. He cast around it a glance of loathing. It represented everything that was antipathetic to Toby. He took up the accountants' typed report. The secretary had bound the dreadful thing with blue ribbon. Toby cried impatiently:

"Why the devil isn't the thing pinned at the top corner so that one can turn it over?"

He looked through the pages. His perfunctorily acquired business training enabled him to see that "Palmyre" was still a flourishing concern.

"I can't see what you want me here for any longer," said he, throwing down the typescript.

Miss Torkington spread out deprecating hands. A few months' absence. What did that matter? The tradition of his touch still remained, but they couldn't of course, keep it up. Young Mr. Vivian Costello, who was designing on the same tradition, was a find. But between master and follower, what a difference!

"Let us see what he has been doing?"

She brought him a portfolio. He turned over the drawings.

"They're good. They're more than good. There's some diabolically beastly genius behind them. He obviously loves this sort of thing."

"Would you like to see him, Major Boyle?"

Toby rubbed his chin for a second or two. Then he said:

"No. Safer not. I'm sure I'd want to kick him."

Before Miss Torkington could recover from a staggering surprise, the demure secretary entered after a perfunctory knock at the door.

"The Paris representative of Dubois & Co. is here, with new materials. Knowing you would be here, I gave him an appointment."

Toby looked at his watch. "I'm not going to see him. Tell him to come back this time next week. I'm going to lunch. Good-bye."

He fled downstairs. At the bottom he came across a saleswoman carrying some furs on her arm. An idea struck him.

"Let me see them."

She halted. He fingered them appraisingly.

"We got them in for Lady Pryde, sir."

There was a big collar of silver fox, thick and perfect.

"I'll take this away with me," he said.

He slung it over his arm and walked across the great hall. Near the doorway he was arrested.

"Oh, Major Boyle! I am so glad to see you back. I see from the newspapers you have had a dreadful experience."

"Yes," said Toby. "Rotten."

"But now you're back, safe and sound for good and all. I don't know how we've got on without you."

Toby sweated. If there was one woman he disliked more than the others who came to "Palmyre," it was the Hon. Mrs. Bemmerton. She gushed insincere sentiment and sincere vitriol. She tapped his arm.

"Now, my dear man, do be an angel. You're making me, though you don't know it, a divine afternoon dress; but there's something wrong with it. Will you come now and see it on?"

"I'm afraid, my dear lady," said Toby, "I only got back last night after a most unpleasant shipwreck in which I lost many friends and a few relations, which has made me extraordinarily hungry. So we'll put it off, if you don't mind."

He bowed and fled like Christian from the Burning City, leaving a gaping and outraged customer.

He had arranged to meet Ruth in the grill-room of the Hyde Park Hotel at one o'clock. Her old-time familiar Harrods was to be the area of her morning's shopping. It was five minutes to one now. He wouldn't leave Ruth unmet for all the Honourable Mrs. Bemmertons in the world. God! What a difference in women! He hailed a taxi and told the driver to go like hell.

No! As far as he was concerned, that was the end of "Palmyre." He would sell the ghastly place tomorrow. Miss Torkington would surely have backers. The new designer, young Vivian Costello, had genius, the abominable epicene genius that makes the man essentially virile sick. The designs were marvels. But the women he had sketched into them—diseased with every malady of body and soul. He was right in not seeing the fellow. He would have kicked him on sight.

He had leaped on to the pavement and paid his taxi, when he saw Ruth coming towards him with her free, long-limbed step. She was wearing a navy blue walking kit, coat and skirt and small hat, and her face was whipped by the

east wind. She smiled as soon as she saw him. When she came up he threw the silver fox around her neck.

"Too cold for you to go out without something furry."

She coloured deeply, and her eyes melted; her fingers sank with feminine luxurious instinct into the deep close fur.

"I don't know what to say to you."

"You will soon," said he, with a laugh. "I've got lots to tell you."

They went into the restful oak-panelled grill-room and lunched at a corner table.

"I had to get a few things ready-made"—she indicated her costume. "I think it's more or less all right."

"Splendid," said he. "You looked like a young goddess swinging up to me."

"I know women are silly," she said, "but that's the kind of thing they like to hear."

"You're about the only one that has heard it from me. And you're the only one that ever shall."

"You have to tell your customers sometimes that they look well in their clothes."

"I'm not quite so sure," said he, "that there are going to be any more customers. . . . Look here, my child"—he met her inquiring gaze—"I'm not going to let you marry me under false pretences. It's this way. As long as I carry on with 'Palmyre' I can make a rich man's income. If I sell out I shall have just so much capital, and must live on the interest—until I can find some kind of investment—with work attached to it. Heaven knows what it could be. I've learned nothing in my life except how to paint a little, wage a bit of war and design women's clothes; perhaps, also, how to love a real live woman. That's all there

is to me. Tell me how things strike you—frankly."

She laughed in an embarrassed way.

"I'm not looking forward at all to living a life of idle luxury. I've not been used to it. I've worked at one thing or another since I was little. It wouldn't be any hardship for me if you took up a new career—especially if I could help you in any way."

"A penguin farm in the Antarctic."

"I'd love it," said Ruth.

They laughed.

"Anyhow, something new and vital like that."

She laid her strong capable hand on his.

"My dearest, if you're thinking of hanging on to 'Palmyre' only on my account, don't. I hate it just as much as you do."

"Thank God!" said Toby. "What's that?" He turned to the wine waiter. "Drink? We'll have some champagne." He chose from the wine list. The wine waiter retired.

"Our first meal together—you and I. We'll drink to the New Life."

After lunch they went about their respective affairs, which were many, and met at dinner in Mount Street. Ruth appeared demure, precise, tastefully trimmed, wearing a simple black evening frock, one of the many results of her day's shopping. Mr. Wilfrid Boyle made her his graceful compliments. Toby said that she looked stunning. He was too deeply in love with her, too certain of her instinctive taste, to regard her with a professional eye. He had no notion of the anguished searchings of heart and

brain that had gone to the detail of the attire in which she would appear for the first time as the future mistress of his home; the home of Major Boyle, "Palmyre," one of the great arbiters of all the feminine elegances. So when he said: "Stunning," with love and gladness in his eyes, she felt very happy indeed.

Mr. Boyle came forward with an embroidered bag fitted with vanity case and what not.

"My dear," said he, "a shipwrecked woman must need all sorts of odds and ends. I hope this is one of them."

A grateful Ruth declared it lovely. It was. Mr. Wilfrid Boyle had perfect taste. He pointed, however, to the tiny black silk bag which she had swung on her wrist. She had already anticipated him.

"This? Oh, this is only a cheap little pocket to carry a handkerchief in."

They dined pleasantly. Mr. Boyle left them early. He had engaged himself to do this, that and the other. Probably to play Bridge at the Athenæum.

Toby and Ruth sat and talked in the great club lounge that was Toby's drawing-room. Great leathern arm-chairs drawn up on either side of the cheerful fire. A leather fender-seat. A deep and wide leathern sofa in front of the library table. They sat on the sofa, the little Moorish table with its great brass tray, holding cigarettes and drinks in front of them.

They discussed the future, loverwise. The world lay before them, an oyster for their youth to open. They would lead a great life, no matter where. They made vague plans. After a while a comfortable silence fell on them. She broke it quite suddenly.

"Toby! I've something to tell you. It has been on my mind for a long time."

"Good Lord!" he laughed. "What is it?"

"It's something to do with Jones."

Toby paused. "Jones?"

"Yes. You see, I felt I wanted something of his to remember him by. I don't know whether I ought to have done it. But when I was last alone with him, I snipped this from his neck. And I've been sort of afraid I did something wrong. This . . ."

She opened her little black silk bag and took out the leather pig-skin reliquary or whatever it was that Jones had kept attached to the chain that held his little oval medallion of the Virgin.

CHAPTER XXII

TOBY looked from the small pig-skin bag which Ruth had placed in his open palm to Ruth, and from Ruth to the bag. It was about an inch and a half square, quite thin, seemingly just the thickness of the two bits of leather. He did not know, for the moment, what to make of Ruth's action. She saw the puzzled lines on his brow, and was quick to interpret his problem.

"It can't be religious," she said eagerly. "Otherwise I would no more have taken it, than I'd have taken the medal. Nurse Williams, who was a Roman Catholic, didn't know what it was. I had thought it something religious, and so did you. You think so still. . . ."

"I'm afraid I do, my dear," said Toby.

"But she was very curious about it. It corresponded to nothing she had ever seen. . . . She had been through the war; nursed thousands of Roman Catholic soldiers. I thought it was what they call a scapular. She laughed and told me a scapular was a bit of cloth, the material worn by a religious order. It couldn't contain a relic, because relics were sealed up and stamped in special vessels at the Vatican. So eventually, as I say . . . just before they came . . . with the coffin . . . I cut it off. Just to keep. . . . Of course no one knew. When the nurse came with the doctor and the men, no one thought of looking."

Toby said: "I always thought it was something religious. But since you're sure it isn't, I don't see where the worry comes in. Of course you wanted a bit of poor old Jones.

Why shouldn't you? If it hadn't been for Jones, where would you and I have been at the present moment?"

She touched his face with her hand.

"Will you always be so understanding?"

"I hope so," said Toby.

After a while he examined the leather case minutely. It was the first time he had ever seen the thing close—still less ever held it between his fingers. In fact, he had only set eyes on it two or three times since Jones had fallen half naked into his trench.

"It's either cobbler's or seaman's work," said he, with the thing near his eyes. "The stitches seem like fine catgut and the leather round them is untouched. Would you mind if we opened it? Together? There must be something inside. Something, perhaps, throwing a light on Jones."

Ruth breathed a sigh of relief.

"It's in your hands now."

Toby drew from his pocket a penknife—he was one of those handy, practical men that always carry a penknife—and slit, with some difficulty, a row of stitches.

The bag or purse gaped and disclosed an edge of paper. That was all it contained, a carefully folded discoloured square of paper. Toby extracted it. Unfolded, it was about the size of a modern cheque form. And this is what they read in a thrill of utter amazement.

HAMMOND'S BANK.

10th August, 1809. CORNHILL, LONDON.

Received from Captain John Gregory Jorico of Vine Street, Bristol, a chest purporting to contain jewels, bullion, specie and Bank of England notes. To be delivered on Demand to Bearer.

THOS. ATKINSON. *Manager.*

"I don't quite understand," said Ruth with a catch of her breath.

Toby laughed. "It's the treasure all right."

"But is this any good?"

"Of course it is. A bank can't repudiate its liabilities—even after a hundred years."

"But does it still exist?"

He explained to her from his general knowledge of the world. All the famous old banks still existed in some new incarnation. Most of them were merged into one or other of the great joint-stock Banks, such as the Westminster, Barclay's, Lloyd's. The contents of their strong-rooms would remain untouched. Now, in the strong-rooms of all the old banking-houses were similar chests. To this day people were in the habit, when they went abroad, of depositing silver and valuables with their bank. In the olden days many were brought by the French émigrés during the French Revolution. Hundreds of them had remained unclaimed for more than a century. To whom did they belong? Certainly not to the bank. The Government could no more claim them than it could claim the box of silver deposited last week.

"And that chest is still lying in a bank-cellar somewhere here in London?"

"In London," said Toby. "Exactly as Jones said it was. I can't say with what big bank Hammond's has been amalgamated; but I'll find out the first thing in the morning."

"And then?"

"Then? Why, Binkie and I will go together to the Head Office, interview the manager, and have the chest stuck into

a taxi. It has to be given up to the bearer of the receipt. I don't see any difficulty."

"No. It seems all right," said Ruth.

"I think I'd better ring up Binkie and ask him to come round at once."

She laid a restraining touch on his arm.

"No, no, dear. Not just yet. Let us try to straighten out things a bit by ourselves . . . first."

He laughed good-humouredly. "Of course, darling. Just as you will. But it's damnably exciting, isn't it?"

"Yes. Damnably. That's the word for it," said Ruth.

He looked at her sharply, puzzled by her tone. She sat, with the scrap of paper twisted in her fingers; and her eyes, full of pain, set on the fire. He asked:

"What's the matter?"

Her shoulders moved in a faint gesture of distaste.

"I wish I had never found it. It belonged to Jones. It was his secret, just as it was the secret of his father and grandfather and great-grandfather—and so on. It ought to have been buried with him."

"It wouldn't have done the poor fellow much good."

"It wouldn't have done anybody any further harm," said Ruth.

Toby didn't catch the fatalistic note in her voice. He reached for the receipt and read it through once again, and examined the tough and blackened pig-skin case and its business-like catgut thread.

"God! I'd like to know the history of it. When was the receipt sewn up? Why wasn't it presented? The more I think about it, the darker is the mystery."

"Why not let it remain a mystery? No one can find out

anything about it. Sir Gregory? What would he have to go upon?"

What indeed? Toby bowed to her wisdom. Any solution of the mystery would be a matter of sheer conjecture. Binkie had devoted three years of his life to the Jorico family. He knew when the Ancestor's eldest son, Gregory, was born. He had found and exhibited to the surviving descendants a lock of Gregory's hair. He had shown them the bald statement, in the handwriting of the younger brother, John Jorico . . . "Drowned at sea." No date. He must have disappeared before the old man's death and been presumed dead by law, in order that John should have entered into the small Bristol heritage. One could only go upon the wildest conjecture, said Toby who found the topic one of absorbing interest. There were one or two tenable hypotheses. The more tenable was this. . . .

The son whom Ancestor Jorico desired to designate in his semi-consciously written last will and testament was the elder son, Gregory. Gregory who had run away to sea. Gregory who had inherited the adventurous Jorico spirit. Gregory the ne'er-do-weel, beloved by the old buccaneer far beyond the younger, John, respectable and sanctimonious—isn't his smug life recorded in the Chronicles of Bristol? Was it not within plausible conjecture that Gregory, scalliwag, like his father, had, during one of his visits to Vine Street, Bristol, stolen the bank-receipt of the treasure, unbeknown to the old pirate? That the old man, still thinking that the receipt lay among his papers, bequeathed the fortune to the scapegrace?

Hypothesis again; but most probable. Gregory had stolen the receipt some years, say, before his father's death. To

have realized the fortune at once, would have inevitably led to trouble. He was a sailor—and in those days a sailor was a creature buffeted about by all kinds of tempestuous circumstance which might, at any moment, rob him of all his floating possessions. What more likely than that he should have sewn up the precious theft in perdurable pigskin and chained it round his neck?

All this theory did Toby develop to Ruth in his Mount Street sitting-room. And this theory, too, did Toby, afterwards, put before me, the narrator of these happenings, and as far as my intelligence goes, I have been unable to find in it a serious flaw.

And, also, here, as it seems a fitting opportunity, I must put on record the final act that, at the time I am writing these lines, two years after the wreck of the *Nautilus*, nothing more is known of the elder brother of the Jorico family than what I have told you. Binkie has devoted most of these past two years to practically barren research. He has given it up for the time being, a son being born to Hettie and himself, and he is now concentrating his mind on the career of the future baronet. I think Binkie has set his heart on the poor little devil becoming an astronomer. If, in the years to come, he apprentices the boy to a Manmother or a professional Herzian Ray Assassin, Hettie will be perfectly happy. She adores Binkie. . . .

Well, this has to be told in order to show you that no human ingenuity has been spared in the effort to trace the vicissitudes of the scrap of paper handed by Hammond's Bank in 1809 to Captain John Gregory Jorico of Vine Street, Bristol, and found nearly a century afterwards

hanging round the neck of Corporal John Gregory Jorico, "D" Company, Fourth East Suffolks.

You may make of it what you like. Neither I nor Binkie, nor Toby, nor Ruth, nor anyone else on earth can tell you more.

You must just accept the facts.

Why, you may ask, didn't the old pirate realize his fortune? Why did he keep it locked up for twenty years? Toby gave the reason to Ruth—and with it I perfectly agree.

He was afraid. It was a question of sheer funk.

There was a fellow called William Bence, who must have had some points of contact with England. There must have been a Bence or two shadowing him, and ready to pounce at a given-away moment. The receipt, too, mentioned Bank of England notes; even in those days, numbered and traceable.

No. It seems absolutely certain that the old ruffian suffered from what we have so recently called cold feet.

He had otherwise saved enough to live upon in what a retired master mariner of a hundred years ago would consider solid comfort. He would wait a while before realizing his fortune; and then, most probably, in a very human way, he put off the transaction from year to year. The fortune always lay there safe and sound in the bank: unknown to anybody. He could lay his hands on it at any moment. As his years increased, very possibly he came to gloat miser-like over his great secret hoard.

At any rate, Toby's Jekyll and Hyde theory was upset.

He said to Ruth: "It's the senseless irony of the whole thing that knocks me silly. It's as if the high gods had been amusing themselves with some remorseless farce . . . Good Lord!" He put up a hand to his brow. "That story of the cave—the cache or chamber . . . I think Binkie repeated it to you. Jones leaning over with a torch while Binkie was down below and this thing round Jones's neck dangling down over the ant-picked skeleton—God!"

Ruth rose to her feet and mechanically laid the receipt on the mantelpiece and turned with a gesture of revolt.

"It makes me feel sick. The thought of the murdered man there . . . and the legend Sir Gregory heard, about the skeletons that had been found outside the cave. All murdered. The negroes of the expedition you heard of from the old newspaper . . . Captain Bence and his company, who never came back. There's no doubt the legend was true. And that terror of an old man"—she waved towards the mantelpiece—"had slaughtered the lot of them. It's horrible."

Toby agreed. "It is, when you come to think of it."

"And the more you think of it," cried Ruth, "the more horrible it is. Where did the jewels and money come from? Piracy. Bloodshed. Innocent people shot down, stabbed, thrown into the sea. I wish to God," she repeated, "I had never meddled with that leather thing!"

She made a stride or so towards him and gripped his broad shoulders, and a flame burned behind her eyes.

"Toby . . . you're not going to touch any of that money, are you?"

He replied in his honest way: "My dear, I haven't had much time to think about it."

"But it ought to have come upon you like a blaze of lightning. You can't." She clutched her bosom. "At any rate, I can't. I couldn't bear to think I was eating a mouthful bought by a penny of it. It's a horror. There's a curse on it. Oh no, I'm not silly and superstitious. It's a mere matter of feeling inside me. The history of that money has been one of blood and death from the very beginning. Hasn't it?"

"Yes. Quite true," said Toby, who sat marvelling at the passion which inspired the woman usually so serene. She went on, heedless of his reply.

"From the very beginning. Jewel by jewel. Bag of gold by bag of gold. All blood and murder . . . Bence, the skeletons, . . . murder . . . And there, thank God—it lay hidden for over a hundred years. But what happened to all that long line of people, fathers and sons, who carried the secret? If I were superstitious I should say there was a curse on them too."

Toby lit a cigarette, in an abstracted manner.

"It didn't do them much good, at any rate. I'm beginning to see your point. As soon as Binkie interfered . . ."

She flung out her strong and shapely arms.

"Yes. And you see what has happened. Death—death—death. All on account of that dreadful chest of money. First Lady Jane . . . Then the man overboard. Then the wreck . . . That poor boy, Nicholas. Captain Culliver and all the brave fellows who were drowned. All on account of the treasure. Dead. What is the roll? Forty. And it was only a fluke that I'm not dead too. And Jones who carried the Awful Thing round his neck is dead. What more death are you looking for?"

Toby rose, her rich voice vibrating through him. He cried:

"Ruth, my child, what do you mean, and what do you want?"

"If you take that money to spend on me—you and me—I couldn't marry you. I couldn't. These dead people would rise up before me all the days and nights of my life. Whatever money you have—what does it matter to me? You've earned it like an honest man. It's clean. I'd follow you barefoot through the world if you wanted me. You know that."

Toby bowed his head.

"Indeed I do."

"So what would we want this money for? It's blood money. No, Toby. I'm not coming to you with this money. I've made up my mind. You can have whichever you like, me or the money. Not both."

"My dearest," smiled Toby, taking her into his arms. "Do you think there can be any doubt? We can give it to Binkie and Hettie to do what they like with. He has earned it, poor old chap."

She drew away from him, and regarded him with the light still in her eyes.

"But why curse them with the thing? It can't bring happiness to anybody. He doesn't need money. He has enough to live on in more than comfort, hasn't he?"

"Why, of course," said Toby.

"And he's quite convinced now that the treasure can't be discovered. Your suggestion that the old wretch squandered it during his lifetime is the only sane thing in the whole insane business—although you were quite wrong.

But Sir Gregory believes it. Why not let him go on believing it?"

Toby looked puzzled. Ruth in this new fiery attitude dazzled his more sober wits. He picked up a great lump of coal with the tongs and threw it on the fire, which sputtered up in flame around it. He turned.

"Between you and me there's no question of the treasure. I give it up. You're quite right. It's tainted from the start. . . . But we must play the game, after all. We must put it up to Binkie and Hettie. The money, including Nicholas's share, belongs to them."

She faced him with a queer smile.

"Are you so sure?"

"Sure? What do you mean?"

"It belonged to Jones, didn't it?"

"Of course," said Toby.

"And supposing you were all in the same degree—I don't know how to express it—of descendance from the Ancestor Jorico—you're all about the same age—that is to say, supposing Jones and the three of you, Sir Gregory, Mrs. Dalrymple and yourself, had the same great-great-grandfather, what relation would Jones be to you?"

Toby laughed. "I give it up."

"This is Jones's estate, as the lawyers call it, isn't it?"

"No doubt," said Toby.

"And if you put it into lawyers' hands—because he died without making a will—the estate would go to the next of kin, wouldn't it?"

"Eh . . . ?" said Toby.

"And do you think that the three of you, because you had the same great-great-grandfather are the next of kin?

What about me—his first cousin, his mother's sister's child?"

"God Almighty," exclaimed Toby, sinking on the leather sofa, "I never thought of that. But it's true. None of us has a right to a cent of it. It would make a hell of a lawsuit if we contested your claim, and it would cost thousands and thousands of pounds. But the treasure belonged to Jones and you're Jones's next of kin, so the whole damned thing belongs to you. Of course it does. I ought to have realized it as soon as we took out that beastly bit of paper from the leather bag. But I didn't. Neither did you. Tell me honestly."

She smiled, went with her lithe, swinging gait, which to Toby, artist and lover, was perhaps the supreme beauty of Ruth, to the table where the drink was set out and brought him a brandy and soda.

"Honestly, dear, it flashed on me two or three minutes after we read it and you told me it was still there in the vaults of the bank."

Toby drank deep. "Your brain against mine, any day." He set down his glass.

Ruth took the slip of paper from the mantelpiece and held it, limp and creased, by the corner. She looked at him almost tragically.

"Toby, this is mine. This Ancestor Jorico fortune, whatever it means, is mine, beyond any shadow of doubt? The two others couldn't contest it?"

"It's yours absolutely, without a shadow of doubt," said Toby, rising. "For whatever it is, you possess the Jorico fortune. What are you going to do with it?"

"This," said Ruth.

She crumpled up the slip and threw it in the fire. An almost indiscernible tiny spurt of flame marked its destruction.

Toby started forward with a gasp.

"Good God!"

Ruth held up a restraining hand and laughed queerly; then she swayed.

"You're a damned great woman," cried Toby, catching her in his arms.

CHAPTER XXIII

Toby and I had arranged to lunch together at his club, before our appointment with Messrs. Dunne, Charteris & Co., Lady Jane Crowe's solicitors. He met me in the hall, and took me off for the preliminary cocktail. He seemed somewhat worried; so much so that I took the liberty of referring to his mien.

"I'm worried," he confessed. "I'm in a state of mind as complicated as a broken-up jig-saw puzzle."

"If I can be of any help, my dear fellow——" said I.

"You've always been a sort of Father Confessor to me," said Toby. "So I may as well tell you. Perhaps I ought to."

"Under the seal of Confession?"

I like to know where I stand when people come to me with their confidences.

"Just as well," said Toby. "It's about this damned Jorico treasure."

I sighed. I thought I had heard the last of the thing. Resigned, I bade him go ahead. What about it?

"It has been lying in the vaults of the old Hammond's Bank, here in London, for over a century."

At this dramatic announcement my mind sprang to attention. I rapped out the inevitable questions. How did he find out? Or was it Binkie?

And then, over the cocktails and over lunch, he narrated the amazing story which I have just done my best to present to you. He told me the main sketch of it, at any

rate; for it was not till later that he amplified it with more or less intimate details.

It was a bit staggering, a long way out of my experience of human action. I scarcely knew what I ate or drank, although Toby had ordered of the best. I only remember saying at the end: "No. A pint of vintage port would be wasted. Just a glass of the ordinary club wine."

You see it was a case of conscience. Ruth's horror of the blood-drenched treasure, and, as far as I could gather, the magnificence of her expression of that horror, had carried him away. He had been confronted with the heroic, in speech and gesture. He had gone to bed with a brain whirling with the revelation of a woman's grandeur, lain awake all night, and in the grey dawn had begun to wonder whether the Panglossian theory of the Universe with which he had tried to compose himself to slumber was right after all. The poor pearls, emeralds, rubies, gold-bullion and specie had done no harm. The Bank of England notes, in themselves, were dear simple innocents; and if there was a curse on them, why, the Bank of England which had been battening on their non-redemption for a hundred years, appeared to be singularly unaffected.

And then there was Binkie. And Hettie. What the devil ought he to do? His ignorance of law was profound. It was only his vague idea of English equity that had compelled him to the belief—which, of course, he still held—that Ruth, as Jones's next of kin, was the possessor of the fortune, and that it was hers to do with it whatever she liked. But was it fair to Binkie? Oughtn't he to be told? Oughtn't he to have a chance of playing what kind of little hell he might fancy?

That was the point. Should he, or should he not, tell Binkie? If Binkie showed no interest in further search, then it was all right. But suppose he devoted the rest of his life to the futile pursuit of a phantom fortune, could he, Toby sit cynically by, and let him do it?

Now, what qualifications can a battered old soldier have for the deciding of a point of casuistry? As an ordinary honest mortal, I thought, like Toby, that Binkie should be told. Give him his chance, if he wanted it, to rock the Court of Chancery (I suppose it would be Chancery) to its foundations. There was the treasure intact, mouldering in some bank vaults in London. The vital receipt was destroyed. Only by Order of the Court would the bank deliver the Chest. To obtain that order—in the event of a decision in Binkie's favour—would cost him all that in which he stood possessed.

I pointed out that the old pirate's estimate of his fortune must have been somewhat haphazard. The trinkets and gewgaws of a hundred years ago and the mere Troy weight of gold-bullion and specie would have no fantastic value according to the market prices of today.

"But shall I tell Binkie, or shan't I?" asked Toby.

I glanced at the coffee-room clock.

"We're already two minutes late for our appointment."

Toby blasphemed, and sprang from the table.

"Why on earth didn't you tell me, sir?"

Unpunctuality is the unforgivable military sin. He flung an announcement to the chief-steward, that he would return and pay his bill—thus committing a misdemeanour according to the etiquette of his club—and dragged me out.

His car whirled us to the office of Messrs. Dunne, Char-

teris & Co. It was close by, in a turning off Bond Street. Very common-sensible are the folk who keep their tame lawyers in the West End of London, instead of in the inaccessibilities of Walbrook and St. Mary Axe.

We were only five minutes late, and the old world etiquette of an old-fashioned firm of solicitors ordained that we should wait another five minutes before Mr. Vincent Dunne should attune himself to the pitch of receiving us.

Our co-executor was a very pleasant, pink, bald-headed man of fifty. He greeted us like newly discovered brothers. Moreover, he had many agreeable things to say—and to read.

"First I ought to tell you," said Mr. Dunne, "that, at the lowest computation, Lady Jane Crowe's estate is somewhere in the neighbourhood of five millions."

"Pounds?" asked Toby.

"Pounds. Her husband left her vast American interests. It will take time to estimate them for probate."

He went on, much to the impressing of Toby and myself. And then he read the will.

As Jane had told me, she had left me a comfortable legacy. This, being my own private affair, has nothing to do with my story.

The interesting clauses, so far as the aforesaid story is concerned, ran as follows:

"In view of their disappointment at not finding a treasure nominally worth half a million of money, I bequeath as follows:

"To Sir Gregory Binkley, Baronet, Major Wilfrid Tobin Boyle, D.S.O., M.C., Mrs. Hester Dalrymple and Nicholas Egerton the sum of one hundred thousand pounds free of

death duties, each, on the condition that each and every one of them shall before accepting the bequest enter into a covenant to be prepared by my solicitors, Messrs. Dunne & Charteris, whereby they undertake to proceed no further in search of the said treasure. And as I desire these legacies to be paid in full as first charges on the estate, and as there will be no legal method whereby in the event of one or other breaking the covenant my Trustees can recover, I can only trust to the honour of those who sign the covenant. I also bequeath to my dear friend Toby, Major Wilfrid Tobin Boyle, my Steam Yacht *Nautilus* and a further sum of thirty thousand pounds."

Then followed many further bequests to friends, dependents, charities; and the residue of the vast estate was left to her nephew, the Earl of Wintermere.

So Toby left the lawyers' office a scared and rich man.

I accompanied him to Mount Street where we found Ruth, just released from a full day's encounter with dressmakers and the like, at tea in the sitting-room. She greeted us in her smiling dignified way, and rang the bell for cups and fresh sandwiches. She had quickly developed her innate gift of graciousness.

"You both look tired," she said.

"Not as tired, my dear, as we shall be when we're in the middle of things," I laughed. "The Trusteeship and Executorship of a millionaire's estate is a beast of a responsibility."

Toby took from his pocket-book a typescript copy of the clauses in the will relating to his cousins and himself.

"You'd better read this at once. It concerns you as much as it does me—perhaps in a subtle sort of way, more."

She read it and, in one of her familiar gestures, clapped a hand to her bosom and looked from one to the other of us with wondering eyes. No human being, however exquisitely balanced, can fall with a sudden flop into unexpected wealth without a struggle to regain equilibrium. So she laughed, in rather a silly way, and her cheeks grew pale. She sat down.

"What are you going to do with it, Toby?"

He laughed. "That's your affair, my child."

But it was only an instinctive question—almost rhetorical, needing no reply—put with the object of gaining time, so that she could recover her lost balance.

The maid entered with the supplementaries of tea. Ruth served us. I noticed that her strong hand was trembling ever so little.

"I hope you don't mind, dear," said Toby. "I told Sir Thomas what happened last night."

I bowed over my tea-cup. "It was a magnificent act."

She looked up rather humbly. "I've been so worried. At the time, it seemed the only thing to do. But . . . You see, there are always such a lot of 'buts' . . ."

Once more the case of conscience.

"But," said I, "to continue your series of 'buts'— Don't you see you've solved every difficulty that might have arisen? Suppose you had let Toby call Binkie and Hettie here last night and given them the receipt . . . wouldn't Binkie have gone off the first thing this morning with the receipt to wherever Hammond's Bank is now, and retrieved the treasure, even supposing it was legally yours? I don't see him sitting down in a beautiful beatitude of surrender."

Toby grinned. "Quite good. Binkie's a fine chap, but

human. He would have contested Ruth's claim. There has been nothing more ghastly in families the world over, than the fight for family monies. Yes, Binkie would have fought. The blood-drenched record of the fortune, that Ruth couldn't stand for, would have left him unmoved."

"Just let me carry on," said I, "and put before you the most reasonable of hypotheses. Binkie gets away with the famous chest of treasure today. Tomorrow morning he receives, as he is bound to do, the notification from Dunne of the legacy and the conditions. Well he has, in trust for you all, the treasure already. The three of you can sign the covenant binding yourselves not to proceed in further search."

Toby shivered. "A bit against the grain," said he.

"Horrible," said Ruth.

"Yet, my dear, as Toby has just said, it takes a very big soul to refuse a big fortune on a point of honour. God knows," I cried, "I don't want to blacken Binkie. We all love him. But in this life we must take precautions and if we can save a fellow creature from awful temptation, for Heaven's sake let us do it."

Toby asked me, naturally, what I meant? I had to speak from the philosophy of the hard-bitten old man of the world.

"Suppose Binkie, technically within his legal rights, signed the covenant with the treasure, on trust, of course, in his possession. You, Toby, would sign the covenant, I think, quite conscientiously. Then you would go to him and say: 'This treasure isn't ours. It belongs to Ruth, Jones's next of kin.' Do you think he would have given it up like a lamb? Who can possibly fathom the human heart so surely

as to tell? So, in my opinion, two very great women have solved a ghastly problem in the greatest of all possible ways—Ruth and Jane between them."

Ruth's eyes were starry and yet moist with sudden tears. She rose and came towards me with both arms outstretched.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!"

I clasped her to me and kissed her.

"And you think we needn't tell Sir Gregory?"

Toby tore her from me, in sudden access of emotion and yelled:

"No! That's the whole moral of the General's discourse. No matter how fine and honourable and forgiving Binkie may be, he's been brooding over this filthy treasure for years, and if he knows it's still lying in a definitely fixed strong-room in London, he'll go on brooding over it. He couldn't help it, poor devil! The mere curiosity to know what the rotten old chest contains would drive him crazy. We know our Binkie. Leave him in ignorance and he'll sign the covenant like a man of honour and won't worry about the darned thing any more."

The strain of the talk was over. We had come to a soothing agreement. We discussed the point of Binkie's academical researches in the genealogy of the elder branch of the Jorico family which ended so dramatically in Jones. We decided that, as a man of honour, he would be perfectly justified in devoting his leisure to so futile a pursuit.

Which, as I have already said, during the two years that have elapsed between these happenings and my present writing of these lines, Binkie, in his methodical manner, began to do. But the birth of a son and heir to the baronetcy convulsed his life to its foundations. Yet he did discover the

facts which established Jones as a genuine Jorico. It was not difficult: a mere matter of searching the Southampton Registers. There was recorded the marriage of one John Jorico, ship's steward, bachelor, and Sophie Tucker, widow. You may remember that Sophie Tellifer married a Mr. Tucker before she ran away with the sea-faring man. Also, a year afterwards, there was recorded the birth to the said John and Sophie Jorico of a son, John Gregory. One of these days, when the infant Binkley ceases to loom a prodigious star before Binkie's eyes and fades into the light of common day, Binkie may resume his research and tell us the whole and possibly romantic history of the elder line of the Joricos. As a matter of curiosity I should very much like to know it myself.

This is a digression. I have said that Ruth and Toby and I had come to a complete understanding. I soon took my leave, it being high time for me to acquaint my not uninterested family with the extent of the bit of good fortune that had befallen us.

And that is all I can tell you of Ancestor Jorico and his descendants.

The one in whom I am most interested, Toby, and his wife Ruth are happy in their big and even imaginative English way. Toby gave free scope to Ruth's instincts rooted for generations in the soil. They have bought rich lands in the West Country and are stocking them with choice cattle in the hope of reviving the glory (combined with cheapness) of English beef. To say nothing of dairy produce.

"Just look at the fellow, sir," said Toby only the other day, showing me a prize (and, I am glad to say, singularly

mild) bull. "Look at the exquisite ripples of those muscles down his quarters."

He curved the artist's thumb. An imp of malice made me say:

"You might have designed them yourself, old man."

He laughed, but said nothing, so that I feared having overstepped. But, as he turned away a few moments later, he put his arm round my shoulders.

"When you come to think," said he, "it is damn funny, isn't it?"

He called Ruth, superb in health, country-clad, and told her the poor little joke. She laughed.

"But after all, we are designing muscles and other points. That's what we're out for. Selection and scientific breeding, so that we can get the perfect economic animal."

"Jolly sight better than designing the perfect uneconomic woman's pyjamas," said Toby.

Well, as I, in my prolixity, have already said, that is the end of the whole matter. But, as a last word, I must make confession that I should dearly love to see that blood-drenched, death-haunted treasure of Ancestor Jorico that has remained useless in a bank's vaults for a hundred and twenty years and, within all human probability, will never be revealed until the Final Upheaval and Stock-taking of the Day of Judgment.

THE END